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ORVAL,

OR

THE FOOL OF TIME;

AND OTHER

IMITATIONS AND PARAPHRASES.

52951

BY

ROBERT LYTTON.

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Dedication.

TO

COUNT ARTHUR DE GOBINEAU,

Minister of France at the Court of His Hellenic Majesty; Member of the *Société Asiatique* of Paris; Author of '*Esquisse sur l'Inégalité des Races;*' '*Traité des Ecritures Cunéiformes;*' and '*Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale,*' &c.

Among the most praiseworthy customs of antiquity was that which imposed upon the discoverers of any new source, or spring, the pious obligation to build upon the spot some altar, however rude or humble, in honour of the beneficent Presiding Power. I have long wished, my dear friend, to dedicate some such reverent tribute of grateful feeling to those new sources of instruction and enjoyment which your genial friendship and fertilizing intellect have opened to myself: but were I to defer the fulfilment of that wish till I have the means of accomplishing it in a manner more to my own satisfaction, and better deserving your acceptance, I should wait too long. Receive, then, not for the worth of its materials, but the sincerity of those sentiments which have inspired its dedication, this very slight memorial of a solid and lasting esteem.

ROBERT LYTTON.

PREFACE.

THE scenes which, under this title, occupy the greater portion of the present volume, are of a character that can be best explained by a short statement of the circumstances and feelings which led to their being written—now many years ago.

I had long been engaged upon an attempt, which was certainly a difficult one, but which had previously been contemplated by Schiller as neither impracticable nor unworthy of his genius: to make the great Revolution of 1789 the subject of poetic treatment. In this attempt, the object I proposed to myself was precisely the reverse of that which has been followed in a work recently published. *Chronicles and Characters* represent the endeavour to give a concrete form to some of those abstract ideas which are the final residuum of remote historical events, and which, surviving "the

ceaseless dying of men's lives," constitute that "result of man" which "doth endure above the dust man drops in." But, in attempting to derive the materials of poetry from historical events still recent, I should, on the contrary, have endeavoured to get rid altogether of the concrete character of them. Keeping only in view the abstract principles which they represent, I should have illustrated those principles by the action of imaginary characters in the delineation of which all external resemblance to persons who have actually existed would have been carefully avoided. Such a poem would, therefore, have been symbolic, rather than historical; panoramic, rather than dramatic. For this reason the scene of it was laid, not in France or any known locality, but anywhere or nowhere; that is to say, wherever the reader's own imagination might be pleased to place it. For the same reason, all the persons in this imaginary drama were so named as to associate them as little as possible with any distinct nationality. They were designed to be the representatives, not of this or that nation, but of all society. Indeed it is not France only, but the

whole social organization of the eighteenth century throughout Europe, that was revolutionized by the events of 1789. Could those events be cancelled from the memory of man, this nineteenth century would be a social orphan, a political paradox, an insoluble historical enigma.

It is often averred that in 1789, and throughout the course of their great revolution, the French people, grasping at the vain shadow of an ideal society, sacrificed the valuable substance of political liberty. But the aim of the French Revolution was not Liberty only: it was Liberty, in connection with Fraternity and Equality: and it must, I think, be admitted that the effects of that revolution have made clear way throughout Europe for the progressive self-development of modern society, by loosening at the roots all kinds of political force that are not in co-operation with modern ideas. In the continuous, though often secret, action of modern ideas upon the political structure of modern society, the impetus of France is still everywhere felt; because those ideas have been baptised in the blood of the French people. Doubtless, modern

society is not modelling itself exactly upon the ideas either of Rousseau or of Robespierre. The modern steam-engine, however, has scarcely any external resemblance to that rude valveless mechanism in which the germ of it was first embodied; and, if the discoverer of steam as a motive power had been blown up by his first imperfect model of a *steam-engine, would it not be as* reasonable to deny the practical importance of his discovery, as it is to ignore the constructive force of the first French Revolution, because the memory of it is associated with the sanguinary and revolting traditions of all that was destructive in the Red Terror?

The atrocities perpetrated by the Revolution were local. The constructive ideas to which it first gave, however rudely and imperfectly, social expression, are universal. But to us who, whether we love or hate it, are the social descendants of the Revolution, much of its importance is represented by its acknowledged failures, which have indicated and bequeathed to us the social taskwork of our own generation. The moral value of political liberty, for instance, depends upon that of the com-

munity which enjoys the possession of it. For, since political liberty is only the absence, or suppression, of all arbitrary and artificial interference with the exercise of individual liberty, the moral and intellectual character of it must obviously be determined by that of the various individualities to whose preponderating social tendencies it secures political expression. No imaginable freedom in the combined action of individual *illiberalities* can possibly constitute a really *liberal* organization of society. This is why the universal tendency of the revolutionary idea is—not to weaken the executive, but to liberalize the community. It makes little of political form, but much of social fact. Its antagonism is not to unity in the mechanism of government, but to separation and exclusiveness in the structure of society; and to reconcile the maximum of political force with the minimum of social privilege is the problem it propounds to us.

In England, which still stands before Europe as the great representative of individualism *versus* socialism, it must be confessed that political liberty, almost unlimited, co-exists with a lamentable amount

of social prejudice and religious intolerance.* If France, which stands before Europe as the great representative of socialism *versus* individualism, should ever achieve complete political liberty, her political liberty may possibly be of a higher character than ours; unless, indeed, the social and moral revolution which England is already undergoing should be successfully completed before then. For the great French Revolution has practically established in France, (not merely as an intellectual conception but as a realized social fact,) an organization of society founded on the revolutionary idea of Equality and

* Greater even than in Spain. For there, religious intolerance is the attribute, not of society, but of a government which has both misconceived and misrepresented society. And even as regards the intolerant portion of the community (a portion much smaller than it is generally believed to be), religious intolerance is the result, not so much of social traditions, and individual tendencies, as of assiduous official training. Whereas, in England, the intrusion of religious opinion upon social freedom cannot be attributed to government, which is weak and temporising, but results directly from the character of the community, which is intolerant and powerful. The intelligence of Spain, in all the great centres of population, is deeply penetrated by the modern sentiment, which is anti-theological, and anti-sacerdotal, as well as anti-sectarian. The same remark applies to France, and all other Catholic countries.

Fraternity, which is already strong enough, both to impose its irresistible influence upon the character of every administration that is, or can be, formed in that country,* and also to be rapidly undermining the foundations of every society throughout Europe which, standing on a less thoroughly revolutionized basis, has hitherto maintained itself by the strength of any other social ideal. The august hopes of modern society may well console it for the temporary failure of much which the Revolution aspired to construct. But society is the child of Memory as well as of Hope; and, in its fairest memories, the present generation, at least, is not without cause to lament the loss of some things which the Revolution succeeded in destroying.

Among the losses of modern society I count the extinction of those delicate, slowly-formed, and far-descended traditions, which are as rules of art for the preservation of the beautiful in matters of social convention and habit,—traditions of a social superiority made up of little things superiorly under-

* "Jamais mon gouvernement n'a dévié du système de la révolution," said Napoleon, after his return from Elba.

stood, and habitually treated with an inherited fineness of perception for what is graceful and decorous in personal behaviour; traditions which, preserved in the daily life of a favoured class, furnish at least an appreciable standard for the perfection of social intercourse. The universal deterioration of manners is unquestionable and deplorable. The charm of little things once lost is not a little loss.* But modern society *is still in process of formation.* The field is not yet entirely cleared. Cultivation is only commencing. The soil is still being upturned; the seed is still being sown. Doubtless, among the harvests of the future, flowers will blossom in due season, not less fair than those which have fallen

* So soon after the Revolution as 1813, and in French society which, at that time, was still deservedly celebrated for a brilliancy and gracefulness no longer characteristic of it, this deterioration of *charm* was noticed by an acute and careful observer. Writing, in that year, from Paris to the Countess of Albany, Sismondi says, "C'est dans la société, presqu'uniquement, que j'ai trouvé le charme de Paris, *et ce charme va croissant à mesure qu'on remonte à des sociétés plus âgés. Je suis confondu du nombre d'hommes et de femmes qui approchent de quatre-vingts ans, dont l'amabilité est infiniment supérieure à celle des jeunes gens.*" Sismondi himself was then a young man—a young man who, in the words of M. de Saint-René Taillandier, "remué dans les profondeurs de l'âme,

beneath the harrow of time. It was not while the feudal system was still struggling for existence that the perfect graces of chivalry adorned society. The heroés and heroines of feudal romance are the conceptions of a later period in which feudalism had

sentait passer le souffle vivant de la revolution," and, therefore, no *laudator temporis acti.* After enumerating the most eminent of these men and women, "qui approchent de quatre-vingts ans," he adds :—"Après avoir considéré ces monumens d'une civilization qui se détruit, *on est tout étonné, lorsqu'on passe à une autre generation, de la difference de ton, d'amabilité, et de manières.* Les femmes sont toujours gracieuses et prévenantes,—cela tient à leur essence ;—mais *dans les hommes on voit diminuer avec les années l'instruction comme la politesse. Leur interêt est tout tourné sur eux-mêmes. Avancer, faire son chemin, est tellement le premier mobile de leur vie, qu'on ne peut douter qu'ils n'y sacrifient tout développement de leur ame, &c.*" And this lost charm, what was it? The same writer describes it as "ce mélange parfait du meilleur ton, de la plus pure élégance dans les manières, avec une instruction variée, la vivacité des impressions, la délicatesse des sentimens. Tout excite l'intérêt, tout éveille la curiosité, la conversation est toujours variée, et cependant ces égards constants qu'inspire la différence des sexes empêchent le choc des amours-propres opposés, contiennent les prétentions déplacées, et donnent un liant, une douceur, à ces idées neuves et profondes qu'on est étonné de voir manier avec tant de facilité." Compare this picture of a society, in which already the deterioration of manners had commenced, with the best society of Paris or London at the present day. What society has lost in *charm* is obvious. Is the loss a little one? No; for it is the loss of a beautiful ideal.

attained to social perfection. And social perfection involves *repose*, a condition denied to modern society. But, when the champions of modern ideas have thoroughly exterminated all those beasts of prey that infest the ruins of mediævalism, yet encumbering the path and impeding the progress of modern life, society will no longer be obliged to fortify its position against the constantly recurring interference of barbarism and anarchy. We may then reasonably hope that the architecture of society will become more polished in the surface, more ornate in the details of it, and altogether more finely fitted than it is now for the undisturbed enjoyment of a highly-cultivated life.

In any case, it is only in its relation to the whole of European society that the French Revolution of 1789 was contemplated by me as a subject for a poem. As regards the Revolution itself, my manner of viewing it is already indicated. As regards the poem, the manner of writing it was suggested by the form in which it presented itself to my imagination. That form seemed not only to admit, but even to demand, the introduction of a

sort of supernatural *dramatis personæ*. The object of the poem was not to depict, in historical detail, any particular series of events, but to give, if possible, imaginative forms to those abstract ideas and general conceptions, from which both the character and occasion of the events of 1789 were derived. But the images which Poesy creates for the concrete embodiment of abstract ideas, must necessarily appear superhuman or supernatural; because they are the concentrated expressions of a generalized experience, and the animated personification of vast groups of moral or material phenomena, surpassing in intensity and completeness each isolated result of particular experience. All mythologies are illustrations of this fact. The gods of Homer are the poetically-embodied and personified ideas of Hellas. And, in a poem aiming at the æsthetic representation of what philosophy reveals in that momentous conflict of forces whence modern society has issued, it appeared to me that the great formative ideas and conceptions of modern society should figure, in no less majestic relation to human action, "as gods, coming up out of the earth."

Availing myself of this sort of supernatural machinery, I had endeavoured to illustrate the historical continuity of events, by means of two great panoramic visions. These visions represented, in rapid procession, the synthetic evolution, from age to age, of the religious and political conceptions, which, by their varying influence, have determined each successive phase of the development of society. The subject of the poem, therefore, would have included the past as well as the present; and, because either my conception was too large, or my faculty too small, the longer I worked at this poem the more unwieldy, and yet withal unsubstantial, it became. On the one hand, I was much embarrassed by the difficulty of avoiding (what, indeed, no poet since Goethe has entirely avoided in the presentation of similar conceptions) all resemblance to the supernatural machinery of the Faust. On the other hand, the difficulty was even greater of so far imitating the example of Goethe's inimitable genius as to infuse into a poem thus symbolic in character, and philosophical in design, any human interest at all approaching, in simplicity and inten-

ity, to the nature of that which renders the first part of the Faust (in despite of its profoundly philosophical conception) one of the most popular and generally interesting poems ever written. In the foreground figure of the sketch I am describing, it was my wish to illustrate the Youth and Old Age of Aristocracy: the youth of it, generously impulsive; and legitimately, because efficiently, assuming the championship of a society with which its interests and sentiments are yet in harmony: the old age of it, self-seeking, and yet self-mistrustful; desperately devoted to the hopeless and anarchical task of defending the privileges and prejudices of the few against the interests and enthusiasms of the many.

I endeavoured to portray the boyhood of the character to which this type was confided, as bright with promise, and full of noble ardour and generous ambition, but unconsciously mistaking sentiment for opinion and impulse for principle. Attracted partly by compassion, partly by curiosity, and the caprice of an imagination always in opposition to the impossible, this boy-heir of a noble house has become the lover of a girl rescued in her

childhood from the violence of dissolute and criminal parents by a young workman. The workman has sheltered and brought her up in his own home, under the care of his mother; supporting the two women, partly by his wages as a journeyman locksmith, and partly by the scanty and occasional profits which, as an obscure pamphleteer, he derives from the literary investment of a vigorous intellect, and an imperfect self-given education. It is by the sympathy, natural to an impulsive intellectual boyhood, for the restless genius and vigorous character of the young artisan that the young noble is first brought into intimacy with him, and, through him, with the girl whom he ultimately seduces. These three characters, therefore, by reason of their best qualities, are placed from the beginning in a false position, which eventually leaves the two men in open and uncompromising antagonism to each other, and to all which they respectively represent.

The two absorbing sentiments of the workman's life are an intense ambition to ameliorate the social condition of his class (by obtaining for it a share in political power) and love of this girl, upon whom all

he tenderness of his nature is lavished, and with whose presence he associates all that is beautiful and gracious in the thought of his home. For the mother, a hard vulgar-minded woman, has nothing in common with her son but strength of character. The child, however, who has grown into girlhood under his watchful eye, protected by his care, and dependent on his toil, is naturally graceful and attractive. To cultivate her intelligence his scanty leisure is devoted, and his still scantier pecuniary resources to beautify her daily life, by surrounding it with such humble refinements as he can afford by dint of personal privation and assiduous labour—refinements which she is easily trained to appreciate. The impassioned eloquence, and intensity of purpose, which already destine him to become a Tribune of the People, have habituated the girl, his constant listener, to a vague sentiment of discontent with the unrelieved drudgery and dreariness of the life to which she is born. His trade as a locksmith furnishes him with frequent opportunities of entry into the houses of the wealthy and the well-born,—opportunities which he so improves

as to procure for his young idol occasional glimpses of the luxurious life, the refined manners, the beautiful and splendid objects, which are to be found within the walls of such houses. These distracting visions haunt the girl's imagination. A somewhat sensuous, and very impressionable and receptive temperament, in constant contact with a superior and partially cultivated intellect, developes in her a keen sense of the beautiful; and she, half-unconsciously, regards herself as a creature whose sensitive appreciation of beautiful things invests her with a natural title to the possession of them. She has lived in constant companionship with her young guardian and instructor: she regards him with the tender reverence of a grateful pupil, and the quiet household affection of a sister or a daughter: but it has become impossible for her imagination to invest him with that sort of mystery and wonder which surround the sudden object of a girl's first passion. As she gradually grows into the consciousness of her own capacity to love, she is compelled to recognize her incapacity to reciprocate the feelings with which she perceives herself

to be regarded by this man. His claims upon gratitude and duty are too strong to leave any spontaneity to an imagination which he has unconsciously stimulated beyond his power to satisfy it. The terror with which she regards her position, as soon as it is fully revealed to her, occasions a certain timidity and embarrassment in her demeanour towards him; perceiving which, the delicacy of a character naturally restrained and mistrustful increases, upon his part, a reserve and hesitation which strengthen the imperceptible barrier already existing between these two lives.

Therefore, when the young noble, in all the flush of his brilliant, accomplished, self-confident youth, appears before her as a wooer, the girl beholds in him the living realization of all her secret dreams, and the complete satisfaction of all her most hopeless aspirations. Her vanity is flattered, her imagination is dazzled, her senses are troubled, her judgment is paralyzed, by the delicious surprise. And the successful lover is really, on his part, in earnest. This is a sort of gypsy episode in the life of an imaginative man; and he yields himself

up to the charm of it with all that enthusiastic ardour which in the boyhood of men of genius so often rebels against the settled formalities and conventions of a highly artificial society. His heart is affected by the sufferings of the class into which his experience has penetrated, and his imagination has adopted the aspirations and theories of his friend, who is the passionate exponent of the wants and claims of that class. He himself dreams of becoming the regenerator of society (for to every young man of more than average intellect, whose individuality has not been prematurely dissipated by luxury, or suppressed by self-interest, society *always* seems in need of regeneration), and, in the love and wonder of this beautiful child of a class that aspires to a lovelier life, he only sees the promised realization of that generous dream. In the fascination exercised over the workman's child by the noble's heir, I wished to illustrate the dawning aspiration of the class which, in this position, she partially represents, not so much for political power (for that aspiration is illustrated by the male representative of the same class), as for a more beautiful

social life, such as an established aristo-
associates, in the highest degree, with its own
exclusive possessor of political power.
that I am amazed by the scornful reproofs
which the working man's demand for "more
met by many influential representatives
opinion. I have often heard it said,
it written, that the hotly competi-
character of modern civilization imposes a
alty upon so selfish a luxury as leisure
of any class, or any individual; and
working man is to enjoy more leisure
dy possesses, he will, at the expense of
mmunity, be better off than any other
in the community. But surely this
volves the unacknowledged connotation
different things by one and the same
said that, whilst tradesmen, lawyers
men make no demand for increased
most unreasonable that working men
o. As regards tradesmen, their appre-
isure must, of course, be relative to
iation of money-making. If they value

money-making more than mind-making, if they rate the acquisition of wealth higher than the acquisition of anything which interrupts the acquisition of wealth, undoubtedly they will esteem leisure as a profitless waste of time, and neither desire nor demand it. That is a question for their own consideration, in the decision of which they need the protection, nor the exhortation, of others. But it cannot be denied that this excessive devotion to money-making "at any price," is accompanied by an ugliness of social life, a narrowness and coarseness of intelligence, a deficiency of moral independence, and a slavish self-surrender to clap-trap, which are by no means agreeable characteristics of the lower stratum of the middle class in England.

As regards the intellectual classes, however, the case is obviously different. Their labour is labour of the mind. It exercises all the highest faculties of the understanding. The labour of the workingman is labour of the hand only. It involves only the minimum of mental activity, and occasions no intellectual development. Leisure for the lawyer, the writer, the statesman, means *relaxation of the in-*

Leisure for the operative means *cultivation of ellect.* A society which says to the vast y of its members "You shall exercise ltivate to the utmost the mechanical fa- f your hands, in order that you may in- the wealth of the community, but you ever either exercise or cultivate the in- al faculty of your minds, whereby you might e the intelligence and morality of the com- "—is a society condemned out of its own and doomed by the justice of events to transformation. A governing class which is, is unfit to be a governing class: and the d of the working man for leisure, that is, for to complete his moral and intellectual being, ns to become a man instead of a human ma- is assuredly a demand that cannot conscien- y be rejected by any community of Christians. onishes me that the clergy who, as representa- of upper-class morality, profess so anxious a ude for the souls of the lower orders, should, main, evince so little concern for the minds the bodies of them; and that Lord Shaftesbury's

wise warnings should have failed to teach them that the one is not more important than the other. Do they suppose that a high condition of morality is compatible with a low condition of intelligence, or that morality can rest on any other basis than men's intellectual conception of what morality is? Do they hope that men whose most pressing wants are physical wants can be persuaded that the best means of securing the joys of Heaven is to place implicit faith in the doctrines of those whom they find to be indifferent to, or ignorant of, the best means of securing to them the commonest and most necessary comforts of earth?*

* I remember being, as a boy, powerfully and painfully impressed by the circumstances of a police case which I read in the newspapers. A ruffian, living in the back slums of London, had, being mad with drink and jealousy, horribly murdered his wife in a paroxysm of brutal fury. He was tried for the crime and condemned to death on the clearest evidence. Owing to various circumstances his execution was postponed. In the short time which elapsed between the man's condemnation and his death, certain Bible-readers and other philanthropic persons who had access to this condemned felon, succeeded in teaching him to read, and, in some degree, to think. The man's natural intelligence, when unobscured by the fumes of alcohol, and withdrawn from the customary savageries of a dissolute and desperate life, appears to have been extraordinarily receptive.

aid, however, that the wants and demands hole community at large forbid the satis- f this particular demand on the part of the *man, without injury to the entire structure* y.

this were true, would it not be a serious in the entire structure of society? But true? Is it true that, of all the organs with nature has provided him, the only ones the working man can use without injuring neral welfare of the whole community, are ten fingers; and that these he must use inces- without hope of relaxation, now when Provi- appears to have furnished him with two great

reported of him that, under the care of these teachers, he learned to read so well that, before he went to the scaffold, he could read the Bible without assistance. His first page of that book was read, and (so the public was informed) his first prayer was breathed, almost within sound of the nails which were being driven into the gibbet on which he was about to suffer. Certain persons were so strongly impressed by these facts that they forwarded to Lord Palmerston, who was then Minister for the Home Department, a petition for mitigation of sentence. But the crime was atrocious, clearly proved, and without "extenuating circumstances." The man was hanged. At that time the Church was vehement in her demand for ex-

means of diminishing manual labour—machinery and combination?

The foregoing remarks are no digression from the essential subject of this preface: and if, in making them, I have interrupted the outline of a poem which it is the purpose of this preface to describe, it is only in order to explain the ideas which that poem was intended to illustrate. The opening scenes of the poem were occupied by the action of the three characters whose false position towards each other has been already defined. Behind the misplaced images of the two young lovers should have been perceptible to the reader the hostile presence of all those social sanctions and prohibitions

clusive jurisdiction over the education of the people. Reading this horrible story, one naturally asked, "In Heaven's name, what is the Church about?" The question was answered at length by the "Times" newspaper, which contained the report of this man's execution. The greater portion of that paper—the space of several columns at least—was occupied by an elaborate discussion between the Rev. Mr. Gorham and His Grace the Bishop of Exeter, as to the vital church question of the time—whether or not an unbaptized infant is after death consigned by the Deity whom Christians worship, to a place of eternal torment, in punishment of the omission by its parents of a prescribed ecclesiastical ceremony. This needs no comment.

which derive their jurisdiction from the reiterated assent of generations, and are the virtual executors of the will of ages. These are clearly recognized by the third character in the group—that of the young workman, who is never deluded by the notion that the separation of classes may be removed by simply disregarding it. His warnings and remonstrances are, of course, neglected; and he goes forth, under an excessive sense of intolerable wrong, and with an unquenchable thirst for vengeance, upon his crusade against a society which he has learned to regard as the great corrupter of human nature, vitiating one half of mankind by want and the other by wealth. To the acquired graces and artificial refinements of this society, which is reproached with having abandoned the simplicity and equality of an imaginary state of nature, he attributes the ruin of all that was dear to him; and it is, therefore, from the total dissolution of existing society that he demands the salvation of mankind. Thus, he falls into that reactionary asceticism which was so disastrous to the Revolution of which he afterwards

becomes the leader ;—an asceticism which sought to exterminate one portion of society for the benefit of the remainder, and recall mankind to the republican simplicity of the Golden Age by means of the Reign of Terror.

This episode is abruptly terminated by an event which places the young noble at the head of an ancient and powerful house, invested suddenly with all the responsibilities and privileges of a great social station, and furnished with a vast field for personal ambition. In the blaze of a prospect so splendid, the faint impressions of a boyish fancy are soon effaced ; and together with new interests, new sentiments and opinions are formed. A man whose personal position society has made so comfortable is easily persuaded that society must on no account be disturbed. The aristocrat has already reached that stage of life at which the horizon of it appears bounded by certain definite and attainable objects. These objects are fixed and formed by the world as it is, and not by the world as it might be, or should be. For the attainment of them, a man takes stock of his faculties and op-

portunities; he ceases to dream and begins to plan; impulse settles into purpose. But, in order to make the world, as it is, bear fruit to him, in the form of personal success, a man must cultivate the world as it is. To the ambitious noble the best means of extending his personal influence upon the established order of things, by most effectually placing him in personal harmony therewith, is a marriage which perfectly accords with all the requirements of his social status. The wife he selects is a model of domestic virtue, with strong affections and few ideas,—a woman of bounded faculty, though worthily representing all the personal graces of the class to which she belongs, and devoted to her husband, because he is her husband, whilst unable either to understand, or to sympathise with, his imaginative temperament and complex character. The charm of his previous illegitimate passion was its impulsive rebellion against the unacknowledged supremacy of the fitness of things. The charm of this legitimate union is its persuasive and gracious reconciliation with all that has now become attractive in the acknowledged fitness of things. In

both instances, the man himself is the sport of his own imagination; and on both occasions he, for the time being, sincerely believes himself to be permanently enamoured of the realization of his fugitive, and ever changing, ideal of life.

Amid all the splendid festivities with which this marriage is celebrated, the outraged friend of the deceived and forsaken girl endeavours to win access to the bridegroom, as the bearer of a last message from her dying lips, recommending to his paternal protection the illegitimate fruit of their ill-fated union; who is a son. But the man's ragged appearance, and excited manner, expose him to ridicule and outrage. He is hustled in the doors, beaten by the lackies, insulted by the guests, and, in a paroxysm of exasperated feeling, he strikes a noble, is arrested, and thrown into prison.

There, he is visited by the priest; who comes to administer the customary conventional dose of exhortation and admonition; but departs silenced and troubled by the terrible reproaches, the brutal truths, and stabbing questions which he finds himself unable to answer. The priest is an honest,

gentle-hearted, and well-intentioned man; whose life has been passed in laying down the theoretical law of conventional morality to misbehaved intellectual children. Suddenly, for the first time, he is confronted, in this capacity, with a man of massive intellect, and justly outraged feelings; who, treating him as the childish recipient of untested doctrines devised for the convenience of a hypocritical and vicious society, subjects him to a scathing catechism, and leaves him pricked in conscience, and disturbed in mind. From this priest the bridegroom learns the name of his prisoner, and the object of the man's visit. In great agitation, overwhelmed with self-reproach, he hastens to release the friend of his youth, and, so far as may be, repair the past. But the generous impulse is awakened too late. The prisoner has mysteriously escaped, bearing with him, into the obscurity from which he will only reissue at the head of the armed Revolution, the secret he had come to reveal, and the yet unwritten verdict of the Revolution against all which it has condemned and is about to destroy. Thus the past remains irreparable.

But, in the soul of the wrongdoer, retribution has already commenced. This incident has suddenly evoked, in palpable form, the ghost of his own youth. It rises before him wearing the image of the wronged object of his early love, and clothed in eternal accusation. Immediately he is again thrown out of harmony with life. From his eyes drops the magic veil of his own imagination, and with it, from the woman he has wedded, all the imaginary charm of her presence in his life. Once more he believes himself enamoured of the woman he has lost, because he *has* lost her. When love is only the growth of the imagination, the sentiment which succeeds to it is always pitiless. The husband neglects and insults the wife whom he now unjustly accuses of her failure to represent an ideal with which, unknown to her, he has fancifully associated the happiness of his existence. To him, the faculties of expression and action afford relief from the intensity of sufferings artificially occasioned. To her, no such relief is possible; and she dies, broken-hearted, bequeathing to her husband one child—a son, the sole inheritor of his name and

titles, the sole depository of his hopes and schemes, but sickly in mind and body,—incapable of promoting the ambition, or perpetuating the power, of his father,—the feeble product and representative of a class already degenerate and soon to expire.

Meanwhile, unknown to the father, his child by the woman he seduced, also a son,—born in the hovel, nurtured on the heath, motherless, and virtually fatherless, without kindred, without a home or a name, grows up in orphanage and want, yet hardy and vigorous, and feeling within him all the young life and savage hunger of the Revolution; which adopts him as its child, acknowledges him as its heir, and recognizes in his birth a wrong to be avenged. Throughout the conflict of classes and principles which is to follow, the two children are gradually brought to the knowledge of each other and of their common parentage; and, at the close of the poem, they would have been the last figures left visible amidst the ruins of all around them—standing hand in hand, and looking forward, conscious at last that they are brothers. Thus, no

sooner does social anarchy begin to subside, than the conception of the Family re-emerges, as the permanent archetypo of all society, which suffers by the disorder, and revives in the recognition, of that eldest and holiest of human organizations. For it is only in Love that Equality can co-exist with Authority, and only by the supremacy of the moral, over the intellectual faculties, that the just equilibrium of social interests can be peacefully and permanently maintained. The Hearth was the earliest altar. The Father was the earliest ruler. With the Family, History begins: from the Family, Religion arises: and the Family it is, which, linking the generations to each other by the bond of brotherhood, preserves from age to age, with the pattern of legitimate Authority, the principle of legitimate Obedience.

There was in this sketch only one other character which I need particularize; that of the Priest. It appeared to me that in the opening action of such a drama as this which I am describing, the central position should be occupied by that august and venerable image. I wished to show

him, yet undisturbed in the possession of his hereditary place as the social representative of spiritual authority, presiding over the whole course of human life, from birth, through marriage, to death. Receding from the foreground as the action advances, he would have reappeared, towards the close of it, under an altered aspect. Having so long been recognized as an integral and necessary part of the constituted order of things, it is not till that order is shaken to its foundations that he is compelled to examine for himself the validity of his title to the place in that order which he must now either surrender or justify. And this, at a moment when all the conditions of thought are distracted by the necessity of immediate action! The very implements of warfare have to be remodelled under the fire of the foe. The security, no longer supplied by custom, must now be won from conscience by the agony of the soul. The age is a sharp questioner, and no longer tolerates commonplaces. Those who would escape the devouring jaw of the Sphynx must answer her enigma without equivocation; and, what is yet more difficult, without hesi-

tation. The Priest's authority is challenged, its claims are disputed, its origin is denied. The opponents of it are not to be silenced by deductions from an hypothesis which is the very thing in dispute. It must either be justified by argument, or maintained by force. But the honest man will shrink from maintaining by force what he cannot, to his own conscience, justify by argument. And when doubt first arises in the moment that calls for decision, between right and wrong, I can conceive no more terribly tragic situation. On the one side are the claims of class, on the other those of conscience: on the one side honour, on the other honesty. However cruel may be the position in which a man is placed if the best action of his life should appear in the eyes of others to be its basest, his case is certainly not bettered if the most decisive action of his life should appear to his own conscience to be a deliberate suppression of the truth in himself. And, therefore, when the mere ambitious politician, who now feels the want, not of a creed, but of a cry, and looks upon the priest only as a political institution, with the fortunes of

which his own material interests and ambition happen to have become associated by the force of circumstances,—when he comes to demand from the priest a solemn blessing in the name of God upon the battle flag he is about to unfurl in defence of church property and priestly power,—then the tragedy reaches its crisis in the old man's heart-broken cry of despair.

It is not without strong reasons, which will presently be apparent, that I have dwelt at such length upon the general scope and character of a conception that was never satisfactorily worked out, and has long since been abandoned. A mere accident discovered to me the existence of a poem, which, with a power and felicity that have left me thoroughly dissatisfied with my own work, gives expression to an idea singularly similar to the one which that work was intended to embody. In an old number of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, I found by chance a prose translation of *The Infernal Comedy*, — a Polish poem, published anonymously (I think in 1835), by Count Sigismund Krasinski, the author (as I have since ascer-

tained) of many other works no less worthy to be more generally known than they are. I read, and read again, this strange poem with ever increasing interest and surprise. Every detail of it remained strongly impressed upon my memory, and so confused and embarrassed all subsequent attempts to complete my own conception that I finally resolved to abandon it altogether. I was, however, unwilling to do this without any record of the feelings which thus induced me to relinquish a work that had long occupied my time and thoughts: and, while the effect of the Polish poem was yet fresh on my mind, the following paraphrase of it was written with a rapidity which is perhaps the best guarantee for its fidelity. This paraphrase was not, indeed, then written with a view to publication; but I suppose it may be properly included in a volume which, like the present, is composed only of paraphrases, imitations, and such like experimental exercises; and I confess that I now publish it not altogether without a hope that it may attract attention to the very original genius of a writer who appears to be almost

unknown out of his own country; and so, perhaps, induce some competent Polish scholar to favour all who are interested in the extension of a *weltliteratur*, with a complete and accurate translation of his works. I was not aware until many months after this volume had been in print, that a short account of *The Infernal Comedy* is to be found in the second volume of *Eastern Europe*. It does not, I think, do full justice to all the merits of the poem; but if the reader should be pleased to refer to it, it will at least enable him to judge whether I have rightly interpreted the conception of the Polish poet.

In any case, he will now understand why I have so long detained his attention. It is because I am most anxious that he should not hastily attribute to the author of *The Infernal Comedy* the many defects which he will probably find in *Orval*, and am still more anxious to disclaim for myself any of the merits which, in despite of all such defects, I hope the genius of the Polish poet may have bequeathed to this paraphrase of one of its most striking productions. It has appeared to

me that the best precaution I can take, in order to prevent the meaning and character of the original poem from being obscured or distorted by occasional traces, in the paraphrase, of my own previous conception of the general subject of it, is to place that conception, as I have now done, fairly before the reader, and thus enable him to detect all such traces wherever they may occur. Indeed, long after these scenes were in print, I withheld them from publication in the hope of making myself better acquainted with a poem of which I believe the present paraphrase to be the first metrical reproduction. But the result of my endeavours leaves nothing of any great importance to be changed in what I have written; and as, owing to some misunderstanding between the English and American publishers, *Orval* has already been published in the United States, there remains no adequate reason for any longer postponing the publication of it in England. If the work should ever reach a second edition, I shall then endeavour to improve it; but I sincerely believe that, in its present form, it is a tolerably faithful reproduction of a poem

which is unlike anything that I know of in English literature, although it must be admitted that it has not altogether escaped the influence of Goethe.

All that I have intentionally retained in the paraphrase of my own unfinished poem, are the names of some of the characters, which will probably sound less unfamiliar to English ears than any purely Polish appellations. I have not retained the characters themselves; although that of Orval strongly resembles the character I had given to my own sketch of the aristocratic chief. Regarded merely as an individual, Orval represents, not the temperament of the poet, but that form of the poetic temperament which is produced by a spurious enthusiasm springing, not from the soul, but the senses, and ever mistaking the imagination for the heart. "He that hath a heart shall yet be saved," is the warning note of his guardian angel; and the reason why Orval succumbs to the three great temptations of his life is, that intellect without heart, passion without love, and power without sympathy, are satanic and accurst. "The stars of

heaven encircle thy head," exclaims the poet whose conception is embodied in the following paraphrase, "The waves of ocean are at thy feet. Before thee springs a rainbow that spans the deep and pierces the cloud. All thine eye beholds is thine, and for thee only. Nations, cities, men. Thou entwinest men's hearts as with a garland, weaving and scattering it again at the caprice of thy touch. Thou hast power upon men to make them weep, to make them smile, and again to chase the smile away, for a moment, for an hour, often for ever. But thou thyself, what dost thou feel? What dost thou think? What dost thou create? From thee springs the fountain of Beauty: but Beauty thou art *not*. Woe to thee, woe! The infant that sobs upon its mother's breast, the flower of the field that knows not its own sweetness, are worthier in the sight of the Lord than thou art. Whence art thou, fleeting phantom? thou that dost proclaim the light, and hast never seen it, never shalt! Woman and thou, ye are of the same origin. But thou sufferest, thou too! Albeit thy suffering creates nothing, ministers to nothing. The groans of the humblest wretch are

counted amongst the notes that stream from the harps of heaven; but thy despairs, thy sighs, fall to earth: Satan receives and adds them, with infernal joy, to his lies and his illusions. God shall deny them at last, for they themselves are the denials of God. Not of thee, O Poesy, mother of beauty, and saving grace, not of thee do I complain! Happy is he in whom thou hast placed thy dwelling, and dost abide even as God in the midst of his world, unseen, unknown, yet universally present, universally felt; for the creatures bow themselves, and murmur, 'He is here!' So shall he bear thee as a star upon his brow, seeking only to display, not himself, but thy love: and so, loved of thee, shall he love mankind, and shine as the hero shines, in whose brightness his brothers rejoice. But he whom thou hast placed between worlds in embryo and worlds in ruin, enchanted by the memory of the past, and the presentiment of the future, woe be to him, if, unfaithful, he betray thee before his watch be done, and deliver thee over to the perishable joys of a perishing time. On his head, as thou passest, thou dost scatter a few

flowers, and lo! thou art gone from him for ever: and he shall pass his life in weaving withered blossoms for a funeral chaplet. Woman and he are of the same origin." *

Such a character, rendered restless by the conscious possession of intellectual power, and an unappeasable impatience to convert it into external and visible dominion over others, impelled by great vanity, and sustained by great energy, is able to dazzle, to impose, to command: and its career is certain to be one of great personal distinction. But it is unable to create, for it is without love, and never in co-operation with the creative forces of human sympathy. Therefore, from a social point of view, the career of such a character is a miserable failure, useless to mankind, sterile in despite of its activity, and conducive only to the suffering of all who are socially submitted to its influences.

> "Because thou never hast loved aught, nor ever
> Hast aught adored but thine own self, O soul,"

is the dirge with which the evil spirits receive it at

* *The Infernal Comedy.*

the goal of its ambition. For this reason, if Orval be regarded as the type of a class, it appears to me that he is the fitting representative of an Aristocracy born with the instinct of command, and looking upon the possession of political power and social supremacy as a personal appanage rather than as a public trust. It is the inheritor, indeed, of splendid and noble traditions, and retains, even in its degeneration, an external grace and dignity which have survived the inward strength from which they were first derived—as a well-trained athlete, even in the feebleness of his old age, will walk with easier gait and statelier carriage than an unskilled boor in the vigour of his youth: but it is placed in the midst of a society whereof it has ceased to be the natural champion, and can no longer be the chief benefactor,—a society to which it is already in suppressed antagonism, and which it regards, not with the sympathies of a common interest, but with bitter resentment as the unquestionable judge, and with secret terror as the possible executioner, of its isolated and anomalous existence. Such an aristocracy is naturally selfish; for the motives of its activity,

having ceased to be social, become purely personal, and are anarchical in proportion to the intensity they retain. It stands in the way of the world's progress. It fights, not as of old, for the general welfare of the community, but for the retention of its own vested interests, without any regard to their present fitness or advantage to others. It is fond of big words and sounding phrases. It dresses out its little passions and animosities in the stolen garments of the gods; and is never ashamed of claiming the highest sanction of Religion for the lowest coalitions of egotism and prejudice. In order to sustain its unequal struggle with "the stars in their courses" fighting against it, it is compelled to tax the imagination for an enthusiasm with which it is no longer spontaneously supplied from the conscience and the heart. It is therefore profuse in the endeavour to poeticise its own selfishness with a sort of spurious poetry, which parades the externals of the past in the eyes of men whose social salvation depends upon a just answer to the essential requirements of the present.

Of such an aristocracy, engaged in such a strug-

gle, the hero of my paraphrase is the type; and indeed what chiefly determined me to abandon the conception upon which I had been working when I first read the extraordinary poem described, was the embarrassing similarity of three of my own characters, and of the position in which they were placed, to the three characters which in the paraphrase I have named Orval, Veronica, and Muriel. In some of their most essential features, at the same time, these are entirely different from my own sketches: the madness of the wife, and the blindness of the son, being conceptions of the Polish poet which give to his picture of Orval's domestic life a peculiar significance; and other differences separating the two conceptions even more widely. Nothing of my priest, but the name of him, remains in the Father Adam, who scarcely appears in these scenes. Scarcely is there any resemblance between my young revolutionary soldier and "the Modern Brutus" of *Orval*, who represents the "Leonard" of *The Infernal Comedy;* and utterly different from my own idea of the Revolutionary Leader is the Panurge of the Polish poem.

The author has described with great minuteness even the personal appearance of the man; introducing him in these words to the reader: "A song! once more a song! a new song! But who shall begin it, this song? Who shall finish it? Ho! give to me the Past, the Past of steel and iron, with its warrior helmets darkened by floating plumes! And over your heads shall hover the enormous shadows of old cathedrals, and once more out of the mists of time shall emerge the massive masonry of gothic towers. . . . . Once more? Ah no, the effort is in vain! these things are gone. Never more shall they return. Tell me, whosoever thou beest, what dost thou hope? what dost thou believe? Trust me, it is easier to slay thyself, and die, and be at rest, than to invent for thy life a new faith, or to resuscitate in thy soul an old one. Shame on thee! shame upon ye all! For, in despite of yourselves, miserable wretches that ye are, heartless and brainless herd, the world is hurrying ye on with it. It mocks ye, plays with ye, pushes ye forward, and tramples ye under foot. And the staggering couples, scramble

up, totter forward, slip in blood, lose their footing, and are whirled away. In blood? ay, for blood there is, and verily there is no lack of it." Then follows a detailed description of the revolutionary multitude, mad with hate and hunger, and this is the portrait of its leader. "But, in the midst, a man arrives. He mounts a chair, then he mounts a table. He is above them all. He speaks to them. His voice, that lingers in the utterance slow and strident, falls into words short, sharp, incisive, easily retained. His brow is large, and lofty. His head is wholly bald. Thought has eaten away the last hairs of it. His bony countenance, framed in a collar of black wiry beard, never varies the dry yellow hue of it, in which no flush of passion or emotion is ever visible. He fixes on the listening multitude beneath him a look, cold, quiet, imperative, unshaken by doubt or hesitation. And, when he lifts his arm, he stretches it towards them stiff, straight, ungainly, with a fastening finger. And they bow the head, and hush the murmur, and await the benediction of a great intelligence, which is not that of a great heart. A great heart? Bah!

Away with your great hearts! Great hearts and great prejudices let them die together. *Vive la joie, et le massacre!*" *

Count Krasinski's entire conception of the revolutionary drama is indeed profoundly sad, as will appear from what I now proceed to say of it. The accents of his poem are those of farewell, not of welcome. In this, more even than in anything else, does it differ from my own. It closes with the picture of a universal failure, without a hope beyond. It must be remembered always that it was addressed by a Polish poet to the Polish people. Representing, as it does, the life of the individual in his twofold relation towards the Family and the State, its action is placed by the first part of it within the sphere of the domestic, and by the latter portions of it, within that of the social, duties; and all these duties are misconceived by the imaginative egotist to whom everything becomes, not

* *The Infernal Comedy*, Part III. Whereto the author prefixes this sentence from the Rapport du Citoyen Caillot, commissaire de la sixième chambre. An iii. 5 prairial. "Il fut administré, parceque le niais demandait un prêtre, puis pendu, à la satisfaction générale," &c., &c., &c.

indeed material for poetry, but a pretext for poeticising about himself. Domestic sorrow and public calamity, the madness and death of his wife, the blindness and suffering of his child, the anarchy of society, the destruction of his own followers,—in all he sees only a drama of which he is, himself, either the hero, or the author; and this is probably what is implied by those "voices from below" which are the occasional echoes to his continual declamation.

In the character of Muriel, I conceive Krasinski's intention to have been to place, in strong contrast to the spurious Poetry represented by Orval, the fate of the genuine Poet, in an age of which all the productions are sickly, feverish, degenerate; and when Poetry itself, no longer the voice of glad tidings, can only give plaintive expression to the universal suffering. He moves among men, understanding and misunderstood; bearing their sufferings, without receiving their sympathy; blind to the world of material objects which engrosses their attention, yet with eyes saturated by the light of a spiritual life with which he cannot place himself

in perfect unison: and when he sings, his songs are the reluctant prophecies of doom to those whom he addresses. How could he sing otherwise, singing to such an age as that which is represented by the scene in the Mad House, where the whole tragedy of society is unconsciously enacted by maniacs? The child of this age, being a poet, he becomes perforce "a prophet to his father;" but a prophet, not of salvation, but despair. The most elaborate picture in the whole poem is that of this strange sleep-walking child.

These are nearly the exact words in which it is painted. "Why art thou not at play, little child? Why dost thou turn from thy games and toys, thy gambols in the grass, thy chase of the butterfly? King of the butterflies and all the pretty flitting things, little friend and patron of Polichinello, why are those soft blue eyes cast down; so full of melancholy, so full of memory, though thou hast outlived as yet only the blossoms of a few springs? Already dost thou droop the brow upon the little hand as one that dreams; and the little head is heavy with bright thoughts, as a little

flower is heavy with the morning dew. And when, shaking backward those golden curls of thine, thou suddenly gazest up into heaven, tell me, little child, what seest thou there? with whom dost thou silently converse? For then across the pure pale brow fall tiny wrinkles, fine as slender fibres of delicate silk shed outward from the whirling of an unseen spindle. Thy mother weeps, and deems thou dost not love her. Thy little cousins and comrades are offended because thou wilt not welcome them. Thy father, he only, says never a word; but he watches thee, silent, sombre, and then his eyes begin to fill with tears, which he hastens to suppress within the depths of his soul. And yet the leech, when he took thee from the womb, said 'This child will grow great and strong.' And thy sponsor at the font said, 'He shall become the citizen of a great nation.' Once a phrenologist felt thy little head, and said, 'Madam, he has immense aptitude for the exact sciences.' The beggar in whose hat thine infant hand dropt alms, turned and promised thee, for reward, a fair and noble bride on earth, and a crown of glory in heaven. Once a soldier took thee in his arms, and

cried, 'God bless our future colonel!' A gypsy woman came from afar, and long she held in hers the little hand, trying to read its destiny: but she went away sighing, and refused the obolus they flung her. A long long while a mesmeriser moved his fingers before thine eyes, and waved his hand over thy head, but with no effect; except that he went away half mesmerised himself. The priest that came to prepare thee for confession, knelt at thy foot, and would have worshipped thee as the image of a saint. A painter came: he saw thee in a moment of anger stamp that foot upon the ground, and he drew the image that he saw, and placed it in his picture of the Last Judgment; but amongst the fallen angels. Meanwhile, thou art growing; and thy form grows fairer and fairer. But thou hast not the freshness of childhood; thou hast not the clear whiteness of the lily, nor the warm glowing of the rose. Thy beauty is the beauty of mysterious thoughts, the reflex of an unseen world. And yet, albeit thy soft eyes are often lustreless, thy cheek pale, thy body pinched, all they that pass thee pause, and murmur, 'What a lovely child!' If a

flower, already fading, had a soul; and if that flower, from each of its earthward-drooping leaves, could shed, not a dewdrop, but an angelic thought, that flower would resemble thee, O my child!" * Such is the poet's picture of this strange conception, to which he applies the mocking description of *Faust*, "Das Gemisch von Koth und Feuer."

To the foregoing account of my own acquaintance with *The Infernal Comedy*, I am sorry that I cannot add much information about the Author of it. His life, like his own creations, is surrounded with mystery. Of that life, however, one fact is certain. Great wealth, illustrious lineage, a noble name, and a noble character, did not, in the case of Count Sigismund Krasinski, secure the possessor of them from the worst of those afflictions to which the sensitive nature of the poet is peculiarly exposed. The story of his life is a story of calumny and injustice, of exile and pain, moral suffering, and grievous physical calamity; softened, one is thankful to believe from the report of all who were personally acquainted with Countess Krasinski, by

* *The Infernal Comedy.* Part II.

the sympathy of a beautiful and noble-minded woman. I have been told by some who knew him, that during the latter years of his life he was afflicted with blindness,—a fact which gives peculiar pathos to his strange conception of the blind poet in *The Infernal Comedy.* Unlike the majority of the blind, however, Count Krasinski appears to have habitually avoided the companionship of others; and, so sensitive was his desire to escape notice of any kind, that, whilst the poet himself lived more by night than by day, shrinking from society, and rarely visible even to his friends, his poems were only circulated anonymously, and almost secretly, among those to whose secular sufferings and irrepressible aspirations they have given the most passionate utterance. The author of *The Infernal Comedy* is still remembered only as "The Anonymous Poet of Poland," . . . fit and sorrowful designation for the poet of an anonymous nation!

Those who are best acquainted with the facts of his life, have hitherto, with feelings of commendable delicacy, refrained from disturbing the profound

secrecy in which it was the desire of the poet himself to live and die. But his own somewhat untimely death, and the death of another person by whose career and reputation his own were disastrously affected, will now, it may be hoped, remove this scruple. For nothing can be more honourable to the character of the Count than the sentiment, only to be explained by the facts of his life, which induced him to do all in his power to withdraw from notice a name which his genius was so capable of adorning. Born of an ancient and noble Polish family, which yet numbers among its alliances more than one reigning house, Count Sigismund Krasinski was the heir to a considerable fortune, and the son of an illustrious man, who, during the youth of the poet, and most unhappily for the poet's peace of mind, had rendered himself an object of execration to the whole Polish nation, by his supposed betrayal of the national cause. Placed thus early in life, when the feelings are most sensitive, under the torturing dominion of two irreconcilable sentiments, filial piety, and enthusiastic patriotism,

the young Count appears to have imposed upon himself that scrupulous abnegation of all personal distinction which he never afterwards relaxed; and it is anonymously, and from voluntary and life-long exile, that he addressed to his countrymen those poems which pathetically record his undying devotion to a hopeless cause. The anonymous publication of *The Infernal Comedy* was rapidly followed, in the year 1836, by that of *Iridion*, a work which is perhaps the masterpiece of its author, and which certainly contains his largest and most ambitious conception. *Christmas Eve*, and *The Dream of Cesara*, were published in 1840, under the pseudonym of *Ligenza*. It is reported that a small poem by the same author, published in Paris, and entitled *The Temptation*, which, owing to the dullness of the censorship, received the Russian *imprimatur*, was the cause of some hundreds of young Poles being afterwards sent to Siberia for unlawfully secreting copies of it. In 1843 the "Anonymous Poet" concluded one of the most hopeful of his utterances,—a great lyrical outburst of patriotic prediction,—by these words,

"Perish, my Songs, and arise, my Actions." But only two years later, this poem was followed by a series of lamentations which he entitled *Psalms of the Future*, and published in 1845. His last composition was entitled *Resurrecturis*, a little poem which was the farewell of a departing hope. On the 24th of February, 1859, "The Anonymous Poet of Poland" expired at Paris, and, in the words of one of his most distinguished admirers and countrymen, "Silence settled on his tomb." If in these pages I have ventured to invade such a silence, it is because silence is no longer the sorrowful asylum of a sensitive spirit which has passed beyond the reach of calumny. Silence is now only injustice; and every injustice to a man of genius is a misfortune to mankind.

It is so impossible to paraphrase precisely, in English verse, such a poem as this *Infernal Comedy*, that I am only too conscious that the pervading defect of my own paraphrase of it is over-wordiness. It must be remembered, however, that the only natural language of such a character as Orval is rant; and it will also be obvious that, when

the scope of a subject is indefinitely larger than the limits within which the treatment of it is confined, very much must be left to the imagination. To stimulate rather than to satisfy the thought and fancy of others, must be the chief object of a poet whose own fancies and thoughts are compelled to traverse lightly and nimbly a wide field of contemplation: and, for the sufficient attainment of the effect which he wishes to produce, he must, of necessity, trust rather to the sympathetic co-operation of his readers, than to the positive solidity of those airy paths along which they are invited to follow the flight of his ideas. Therefore, to those who may be willing to follow this "Fool of Time" across the wildernesses, camps, and forests through which he is now waiting to lead them, I may say, in the words of a personage thoroughly acquainted with the conditions of all such fantastic travel,

> "If Jack-o'-lantern
> Shews you his way, tho' you should miss your own
> You ought not to be too exact with him."

In conclusion, let me take this opportunity of stating, that all the contents of the present volume

were written many years ago, and were in print before the publication of *Chronicles and Characters.*

R. LYTTON.

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Orval.

Page 161. Epoch IV. Scene II. Eighth line from the top of the page, last word ; *after* "kind" *a comma.*

P. 171. Epoch IV. Scene III. Ninth line from the top of the page. *For* "it matters not if a knife be laid," *read* "it matters not if the knife be laid."

P. 208. Epoch IV. Scene V. Sixth line from the top of the page. *Instead* of "Friend," *read* "Friends."

Paraphrases.

P. 299. Third line. *For* "Along Pencian Tempe's flying," &c. *read* "Along Pencian Tempe flying," &c.

P. 300. Twelfth line from the top of the page. *For* "Lègia," *read* "Ligèa."

P. 305. Last word of last line. *For* "the Getomaær," *read* "the Getæ roam."

P. 307. Seventh line from the foot of the page. *For* "ferrymen," *read* "ferryman."

P. 308. Second paragraph, fourth line. *For* "Rhipæan," *read* "Rhiphæan."

P. 314. Last word of last line. *After* "while" *omit the comma.*

P. 326. Seventh verse, third line. *There should be a comma after the word* "Endeavour".

P. 349. Stanza 7. Fifth line. *For* "That charms stars and moons," *read* "That charm stars and moons."

P. 368. III. First line. *For* "probratime," *read* "pobratime."

P. 372. Third line. *For* "on high degree," *read* "or high degree."

P. 372. Third line from the foot of the page. *For* "this hall," *read* "his hall."

P. 384. Second line. *Instead of* "carved and cleft," *read* "rent and reft."

P. 384. Seventh line from the foot of the page. *For* "touching," *read* "touch."

P. 404. Last line. *For* "ceasèd," *read* "censed."

P. 409. Second poem. Third line. *For* "thy," *read* "they."

P. 410. Eighth line from the foot of the page.
Instead of

"Gazed, the pale Packinitza on him,"

read

"Gazed, and the pale Pachinitza on him."

P. 421. Last line of the third paragraph. *For* "the words," *read* "these words."

P. 421. Second line of the last paragraph. *Instead of* "For her," *read* "From her."

ORVAL;

OR,

THE FOOL OF TIME.

A POEM.

(IN FIVE EPOCHS: DOMESTIC AND SOCIAL.)

"La prépondérance du cœur sur l'esprit, ... unique source, spontanée ou systématique, de l'harmonie humaine."—AUGUSTE COMTE.

FIRST EPOCH.

BRIDE AND BRIDEGROOM.

ORVAL;

OR,

THE FOOL OF TIME.

EPOCH I.

SCENE I.—*Sunset. Mountain and Valley near the Castle of Orval, which is partly visible in the background. Mists forming over the landscape. Distant joy-bells, which cease as the scene opens. The Guardian Angel descends.*

GUARDIAN ANGEL.

FROM soul to soul hath war been waged,
From star to star, from sun to sun:
Nor e'er shall be the strife assuaged
That's hourly lost and hourly won.
ANCIENT OF DAYS, that here in light,
And there in darkness, dost array Thee,
Thou madest day, Thou madest night,
And both obey Thee.

The sons of night Thy servants are:
They work Thy will, no less than we,
The sons of light, that with them war
Unwearied where no end can be.

But woe to man, if light in vain
He sees, and seeks the darkness rather!
From seed of evil, evil grain
That man shall gather.

Dreams fade, deeds fail, and days depart,
And all is changed in time and place.
Thrice blessèd are the pure in heart:
For only they shall see God's face.
Man's life from cradle leads to tomb:
Man's love from Earth may lead to Heaven:
Be thankful, therefore, thou to whom
A heart was given.

Hold fast, O man, to whom God gives,
To keep thy heart still undefiled,
The holy human love that lives
In kiss of wife, and kiss of child,
Hold fast the gift! The hour, that now
To Heaven returns, to Heaven is bearing
A husband's sacramental vow,
Vow'd in God's hearing.

The pure in heart God's face shall see.
They of the Blest are blessèd most.
Man's heart, O Lord, lies bare to Thee:
Shall this man, Lord, be saved, or lost?
Though o'er his soul be cast the net
That Satan weights with strong temptation,
He that hath yet a heart may yet
Escape damnation.

(*The Guardian Angel ascends.*)

EVIL SPIRITS (*rising with the mist*).

With the vapours arising from earth arise,
Shadows of Falsehood, whose shapes are lies,
And enter where ye are waited!
Phantoms, and films, and illusions,
That mimic the light you loathe,
With deliriums, dreams, and confusions
The creature that calls you, clothe!
Choke the conscience, and cheat the eyes,
Strangle the spirit, but stifle its cries:
For the fall of the fool is fated.
Love to lust, and courage to crime,
And sense to sin, for the fool of time,
Orval! Orval!

Thou, first, loved beauty of youth's lost bloom,
The Departed of Yesterday, rise from the tomb,
And bewilder him that bewails thee.
Too soon to the darkness hurried,
Wan ghost, to the light rearise,
And, haunting him, dead but unburied,
Reappear in a dream to his eyes.
In the dews of the night be thou bathed, and bound
With the blossoms that grow upon graves, and crown'd,
By the heart of the fool that hails thee;
With the stars of the night, till the grave-worm's slime
Be as glow-worm lights to the fool of time,
Orval! Orval!

Thou also, old picture of Paradise, well
In the cobwebb'd lumber-chamber of Hell

Hast thou rested, rotted, and rusted:
Beëlzebub's masterpiece, painted
Long since, though thy canvas be old,
And the hues of it tarnisht and fainted,
Yet retoucht with our purple and gold,
Thou shalt brighten, and glitter, and glow, for him,
With the colours of Eden ere they wax'd dim.
Come forth, and be furbisht and dusted!
O Nature, mother of sins sublime,
Fair be thy face to the fool of time,
Orval! Orval!

Last, thou, too, carrion bird of prey,
Whose name upon earth is Ambition, away,
Where the huntsman to hunt thee hastens!
Stuff'd with Hell's ashes and cinders,
Famed Bird of Perdition, depart
From thy perch on the Past. Nothing hinders
Thy flight, though a scarecrow thou art.
Spread thy wings in the ardours of morn, and bright
As the sunrise, and swift as the wind, be thy flight,
Till firmly thy talon fastens,
Red with carnage, and crooked with crime,
On the ruin'd heart of the fool of time,
Orval! Orval!

SCENE II. *Twilight. On the road to the Castle. Bridal Guests and Kinsmen passing.*

COUNTRY KINSMAN.

I say, good men should choose good wives.

TOWN KINSMAN.

Good Cousin,
Were I about to choose a lackey, now,
I'd choose him, Coz, for his good looks: because
There's nothing you can absolutely know
About your lackey, but the looks of him,
Until you've hired him. But, were I to choose
A wife, I'd choose her for her fortune, Coz,
Because there's nothing else a man can know
About a maiden, till he has married her.
Our fair new Cousin . .

COUNTRY KINSMAN.

With brown woodland eyes,
Shy as a forest creature freshly caught——
Zounds, Cousin! if Orval's not the lovingest spouse,
As she's the loveliest, the world has seen
Since Adam married Eve among the roses,
The devil take him!

A PRIEST.

Son, I have known this lady,
Since when she was the sweetest child, whom now
I know the sweetest woman, in Christendom;
Nor ever in the simple saintliness
Of her most innocent soul, have I known aught
To wish away.

COUNTRY KINSMAN.

I am glad to hear it, Father;
For patience is the strength of Saints: and much
I fear that Orval's bride may need that virtue.

Young is he yet; and youth in him was ever
More full of whims and wanderings than the wind.

OLD KINSMAN.

Ay, our old House should have an older Head:
And more than ever in this swaggering age,
Whose starts and turns make sound experience seem
A stubborn ass. But this wild nephew of mine
Is wilder than a young unhooded hawk,
And cramm'd with crazy thoughts: the flatter'd fool
Of the new-fangled time's pernicious prate,
Which no sane man can sanction.

YOUNG KINSMAN.

Uncle, Uncle,
You wrong my cousin Orval! I and he
Were schoolmates. What the boy was, I believe
The man is yet. Rash, choleric, if you will,
But not less proud of his old name is he
Because more proud, justly more proud, dear Uncle,
Of his own power to add new value to it:
Nor yet unmanly vain of gifts the gods
Give no man that is ignorant of their worth:
To him all noble names are trumpet notes
Sounding his spirit to arms: and his full mind
Is stored with every kind of generous fuel
That's quick to kindle to whatever spark
Time, as he passes, from his torch shakes out.

OLD KINSMAN.

Green wood! green wood! all smoke and splutter, boy.
Who was that Priest?

COUNTRY KINSMAN.

His name is Father Adam.

TOWN KINSMAN.

Not the first man in the world? Eh, Coz?

POOR KINSMAN.

Well, I,
For my part, say that I most cordially
Applaud this marriage: which not only links
Two lordly lines in one, but also mends
What in the solid substance of our House
A somewhat too close contact with the Court
Hath here and there rubb'd shabby.

TOWN KINSMAN.

How he'll cringe
To the new Countess, with his lap-dog looks!
Already is he hankering, look at him,
After his platter.

COUNTRY KINSMAN.

For all that, he's right.
I scorn the Court. No king shall ever hang
His key between two buttons on my back.
I'll be no lackey, who was born a lord.
And as for Orval, youth's a fault time mends.
I like his generous wildness well enough.

OLD KINSMAN.

'Faith, all these greatly-gifted youths begin
By taking out a patent of their own
For the creation of the world: and end

By selling it for something they find still
Worth having in the world, just as it is,
As soon as they grow wiser.

COUNTRY KINSMAN.

Certainly.
And good wives make good husbands . . . .

TOWN KINSMAN.

Good books say.
And I say, Coz, a sweetheart's cream: a bride
Butter: a wife . . . stale cheese. Yonder's the gate.

OLD KINSMAN.

And the sun's down. Boy, lift the link this way.
Come, gentlemen; we 're not an hour too soon.

SCENE III.—*Twilight. Under the walls of the Castle. A graveyard adjoining a garden. The Castle, lighted in the background. Dance music from within.*

EVIL SPIRIT (*hovering low*).

I hear a sound, long silenced, heard
Long since; when in this frozen breast
The burning wells of sense were stirr'd
By that wild music's wandering quest.
Long since, and so long since, alas,
I may no more remember when,
In dream, or wake, my dwelling was
Among the homes and hearts of men.
Long since I heard what now I hear;
My lip was warm with love and wine:
Men's praise was murmur'd in my ear,
So fair a woman's form was mine.

But now the fiends that howl behind
Command my heartless, homeless ghost
Some earthly form more fair to find
Than was the earthly form she lost.

(*Over the graves.*)

Blue eyes of Beauty, closed and cold;
Though film'd by death, and stain'd with mould,
Beneath the gravestone dreaming;
Awake! and yield to mine the hue
You give the graveyard violet blue,
When grey March mornings, drench'd with dew,
Among the graves are gleaming.

Bright hair of Beauty, mixt with moss,
—Rich threads the red worm runs across,
When to his work he passes;
Float from the grave, and give to mine
The gay gold gleams you grant to shine
Through butter-cups that glitter fine
Between the graveyard grasses.

Red lips of Beauty, bloodless lips,
Whose lover cold, Corruption, slips
Through coffin planks to kiss you;
Yield what, to flush the graveyard rose
With reflex light, your redness throws
Up bramble stems. No bud that blows
From these will miss you.

Ho! Satin sark, on narrow bed,
For a dead Queen's slumber spread,
Slumbering chaste in charnel;
Leave the limbs, though they be cold,

Of the corpse which thou dost fold,
Clothe me! Thou, too, crown of gold,
Deckt with grave-grown darnel!

(Over the flowers.)

Woe to thee, garden! woe
Be to thy warden! Who
Cometh to check me?
Pansy, and passionflower,
Pranking your lady's bower,
Red rose, and lily, shower
Rare blooms to deck me!

Red rose, and lily white,
Mine must you be to-night.
Fade ye, and fall ye!
Wrench'd be from root and stem
Flower-gold, and flower-gem!
Deck me my diadem,
Each as I call ye!

Blighted this garden be,
Blossom, and branch, and tree!
Perish, or come to
Bloom in my cheek and breast,
Roses and lilies! Rest
Ruin'd and dispossest,
Garden, and home too!

SCENE IV.—*Night. Within the Castle. Private chamber with a balcony overlooking illuminated gardens. Folding doors (closed) in the background communicating with the state apartments of the Castle. Orval and Veronica in the balcony.*

SONG (*with music, from the gardens*).

The Spirit that shepherds and feeds
The soft herds of the unseen Hours
(Among life's flowers, that are weeds,
And among love's weeds, that are flowers)
Wherever his light will leads,
As he wanders this world of ours,
Those flocks of his
Whose sweet food is
The fresh-fallen dew of the blossoming bliss
That is wither'd as soon as it flourishes :—

ORVAL.

Not yet !

VERONICA.

Then one kiss more, my own dear love,
My husband, . . . all best things in one best word !

ORVAL.

O breathe not, breathe not, even . . . much less, move,
Thou fair fulfilment of all dreams !

VERONICA.

My lord,
Guests in the garden . . . look ! My ladies wait
To robe thy bride.

ORVAL.

'Twill be no more the same
As it hath been, when we two pace in state,
I the staid spouse, and you the bashful dame.

VERONICA.

Dear despot!

ORVAL.

Sweet, I prithee, by the flame
Of this one moment's fire life's substance prove,
Then take the ashes, Chance! I have lived, I love.
(*They embrace*).

SONG (*from the gardens*).

He hath open'd the pale penfold,
Gray Twilight had woven together,
Of the dim day's faded gold
And the eve's wan azure weather.
And the stars and sea-winds
Which that Spirit unbinds,
As they dance forth in light and in laughter,
Loosen, each from his lair
In the caverns of Care,
The passionate hopes that were pining there,
By Pride lockt fast,
——To follow at last,
Those dancers, dancing after.

VERONICA.

I must away!

ORVAL.

Oh, dreams less fair than this

Have died ere now, slain by their own strong bliss!
Wake me not yet!

VERONICA.

I hear my ladies call.

ORVAL.

No! 'twas the night-wind in those trembling trees
That tremble, being near thee; or the fall
Of yonder fountain, sighing for far seas,
As I for thee . . . some Naïad's madrigal!

VERONICA.

Flatterer!

ORVAL.

My love is great; all language small.

SONG (*as before*).

Night is come forth from her hold:
And the forests and fields unfold,
Mutter, and sigh, and stir:
While, to wander away with her,
From their camps on the mountains cold,
Cedar, and pine, and fir
Are borne upon shadows bold,
Having husht, lest their way be told,
Bird, cricket, and grasshopper.
At her bosom she bears
The twin-born heirs
Of all that is brightest and all that is best,
In the gift of their mighty mother:
Whose faint lips, prest
To that mother's breast,

Are fed deep on the streams
Of the dim sweet dreams
That nourish each nurseling brother:
But, O, which is her fleetest and fairest son?
For soft-wingèd Sleep is the name of the one,
And swift-wingèd Love is the other.

A WAITING WOMAN (*entering*).

The bride's-ladies of Lady Orval attend
My lady in her chamber.

ORVAL.

Ah, the end!

WAITING WOMAN.

The lords of Montmirail, and Fontlerey,
Conan, and Cornuant, and Vitikend,
Cuthbert, and Giles of Orm . . . . .

ORVAL.

Enough! go say
That Lady Orval comes.

(*Exit Waiting Woman.*)

VERONICA.

I must not stay.
Dear love, this noise and heat, how wearisome!
The tiresome dance, the tedious talk! . . How blest,
Dear love, 'twill be in our own quiet home
To be alone together, and to rest.

ORVAL.

No, no! A costlier fancy comes in place
Of that which must depart now . . . to complete,
And crown Love's feast-day with a final grace,

For Love's feast-night to cherish. Go now, Sweet!
Bathe all that beauty in new beams. Prepare
Thy perfect splendour. Think what I must feel
When presently I stand aside, as 'twere,
From my own bliss . . mix with the crowd . . conceal,
So far as fancy can, from every thought
The knowledge of my sovereignty in thee;
And see thee float before me sumptuously
In light, by thy full-beaming beauty wrought
(From love's bright never-failing source, thyself!)
Around thee . . . like the languid splendour, blent
With balmy spices, when some radiant elf
Kindles all round him his rare element,
Upfloating to his native ether free,
While bursts the wizard's limbec . . . . as tho' nought
Of thee were mine, but that which all may see;
Till, spent with wishful wonder, back I sink,
Back on the dear delicious truth divine
That bids me live, with lavish leave to think,
And feel, and know, that all of thee is mine!
Mine, to make costly chaos and confusion
Of this well-order'd world! mine, mine the right
To ruffle that calm hair's composed profusion,
And free that bosom from its bondage bright!

VERONICA.

O hush! my poor heart dreads this dear delusion.
I shudder, gazing from that dizzy height
Where thy praise holds me . . . into an abyss.
I, who am full of faults, and weak and slight,
With nothing but the love you'll never miss
To keep me lovely in my dear love's sight.

When you shall find me nothing of all this
Your fancy feigns me now . . .

ORVAL.

Quench fancy quite
In feeling thus, then . . . drown'd in such a kiss!

VERONICA.

May God, beneath whose gaze my heart lies bare
As the unclouded summer, grant the prayer
I pray'd when at His altar late I knelt,
This morn, and pray'd, when on my cheek I felt
My mother's tears . . . that I may be to thee
All that his wife, my whole heart loves, should be!

ORVAL.

Go, robe thyself in glory! Let my glance,
Borne on thy beauty down the bounding dance,
Glide, where thou glidest, as the passionate bee
Follows hot fragrance through midsummer air.

VERONICA.

My Orval! Dost thou wish it? would that we
Might glide away out of all noise and glare,
And be quite quiet . . . in each other hidden
Safe from all eyes! But what by thee is bidden
Seems ever sweet to do.

ORVAL.

Veronica!

(*She breaks from him.*)

SONG (*as before*).

Ere the moon is washt down by the wave in the west,
(O thought dread and sweet!)
Ere the nightingale, roused by the moon, is at rest,
They shall meet!
They, the twain who, of mortals, were taught by the Power
That gave sweets to the bee, giving scent to the flower,
To find in each other, what few find out,
The one thing sweet in a world so sour,
The one thing sure in a life of doubt.
They shall meet, O where,
They, the Strong and the Fair?
In what hour, not of time? in what land, not of earth?
There where life is delight, and where being is birth:
Where the soul and the sense are one feeling alone,
As the heaven and the moonlight are two and yet one:
Where the eyes from the lips
Drink delicious eclipse,
While, in rose-braided car,
Love, free lord of his own,
To the fair, the afar,
The unseen, the unknown,
Through faint depths of dim fire
Is drawn, with tugg'd rein,
By the steeds of Desire,
In strong triumph amain,
Through the twilit courts of the orient porch
Of the Dawn of Life; where the bashful train
Of those tender timorous Spirits, that are
The bearers bright of his blushing torch,

Are waiting the will of the Morning Star,
To unfasten the gate which the Destinies bar
On the brave bold world, that is yet unborn,
Of the resolute race that is yet to be,
When the sunrise of Freedom, in Truth's fair morn,
Shall be solemn and bright over land and sea,
And all earth be one nation, whose name is borne,
Trampling tyranny, scorning scorn,
By the gentle, the just, and the free.

ORVAL (*alone*).

Ay! wherefore should it dawn not now, that day?

SONG (*as before*).

For the eyes of Hate shall be held so near
To the looks of Love, that their light shall sear
His baleful balls, and snaky Error
Die, caught in the fangs of her own child, Terror.
O dawn of the day we have waited long!
O star of the summits we seek in song!
Arise, and be bright
On the bridal bower
We have fashion'd to-night
For Beauty and Power;
From whose embrace
Bring the bright first-born
Of the Promist Race,
The mild monarchs of Morn,
The strong lords of the Luminous Hour!

ORVAL.

Wherefore not now . . . not here? For some new world

Majestic, populous with august shapes
Of power, and light, and loveliness, begins
From out mine inmost being to put forth fast
Full pulses of a multitudinous life.
O ye innumerable teeming thoughts,
Forces, and faculties, and fantasies,
That rise within me, lords of lucid stars
Whose light makes midnight glorious, are ye not
The monarchs of To-morrow? I have roam'd,
Horsed on four-hoovèd Cheiron, reedy plains
Where river nymphs rose up to stare at us,
And Amazonian maidens aim'd swift darts
That sung and miss'd us, as we fleeted past
Into old sleepy woods. I have twang'd the strings
Of Orpheus' harp, and tasted berries brown,
Asclepios gather'd out of gusty groves
By night for none but me. I have sail'd far
With heroes in a hollow ship, through gulfs
And plunging seas, to Colchis; and have seen
Black-eyed Medea boiling bitter herbs,
And pluckt the fleecy prize, and hasted home
Outspeeding Jason's ship. And, after all
These wonders, I awoke, I knew not where,
Toucht by a woman's hand. And this stale world
Of common life looks new and strange to me,
Who find myself set suddenly, aware,
Awake, with eyes wide ope, a living man,
In the mid concourse of mankind . . . to cope,
Contend with, conquer, or be crusht by it? No!
Already in my right hand glows and throbs
The golden ball of empire! In my soul
Already stirs the instinct of command,

The godlike purpose, the preponderant will,
The proud resolve, and all that makes a man!
Farewell, you fair, fast-fading forms! Farewell,
You ghostly nurses of the full-grown strength
That in these pulses pants, impatient now
For action! Let mankind take heed! There comes,
Uncall'd, among the multitude of men,
A stranger, native to an age not theirs;
Who means from out the mass of mortal deeds
To carve a mighty monument for dreams
That are immortal. Let mankind make way!

PHANTOM VOICES (*on the air, dispersedly*).

Whither, O whither, do we float to find thee?
Thee, whom we chose and cherisht for our own!
Dost thou not hear upon the dark behind thee
Familiar voices making fondest moan?
Whilst thou wast ours,
Say, did we ever seek, false friend, to bind thee
Faster than falling flowers
Which, for thy careless crown
Cull'd by our fond hands from forgotten bowers,
If lightest winds blew (could blown rose-leaves blind thee?)
Dropp'd from thy loose locks, in soft-shaken showers,
Laughingly down?

ORVAL.

Whence are those voices? I have heard them once,
When? Where? But now how changed their tone! how faint!

Doth the wind sing them? or doth fancy feign
The fleeting echo of departed days?
What are those forms that float before mine eyes,
And seem to sink into yon drowning dark
With desperate gestures, and wan visages?

THE VOICES (*growing fainter*).

Faintly, ah faintly (effort unavailing!)
Strive we to reach thee! Thou recedest ever.
Where doth the fault lie? What hath been the failing?
Was it thine or ours? ah, vain the dear endeavour,
Loved one, but lost!
And upon the midnight air we hush our wailing;
Ghost, after withering ghost,
Wounded, with wings that shiver,
Shaked by the night-wind, a despairing host,
Lost as loosed blossoms on the bleak air sailing
Down from hurt boughs that, bitten by the frost,
Bloom again never!

ORVAL.

They fade. So best! Lost friends, whose liquid eyes,
That shine through swimming tears, from mine recede
Like sad stars waning in the windy mist
Night sends to quench them . . . you, whose woeful arms,
Yet waving, melt upon the midnight air,
Whose voices I no longer disentwine
From the night-swarming murmurs of the crowd
Beneath me . . . fare you well, without regret!

If from the world of dreams I am come down
To earth at last, it is because on earth
I find at last a world of dreams fulfill'd
In one unblemisht life's beneficence
Of love for me. God, if my full soul falter,
Faithless to faith so fair, my soul disown!

GUARDIAN ANGEL (*passing above*).

Keep thy vow before God's altar,
And be my brother before God's throne.

A KINSMAN (*of the House of Orval, entering with Father Adam*).

I told you we should 'light upon him here,
Lost in the admiration of himself.
Rouse, Orval! All thy kindred wait below.

FATHER ADAM,

Peace be upon this house, and thee, my son!

ORVAL.

Peace, Father? No! In passion there's no peace.
Painters and priests have given dove's wings to Love.
They err, Love's wings have eagle plumes.

FATHER ADAM.

My son,
Those Loves with eagle plumes are birds of prey
Or birds of passage. Holy household love
Ranges no further than the dove's wing bears
The dove's breast from her nested brood. All loves
That are not also duties, loves that build

No nest, are wanton wanderers, fed by chance
Or plunder; and the husbandman does well
To scare them off, or shoot them down. Young man,
There's more in holy marriage than mere love.
And that small consecrated golden hoop
Circling the finger of a wife, the vow
Breathed o'er it from a husband's heart converts
Into Eternity. Love takes it up,
And turns it to a sacred talisman
That opes to him the sacramental doors
Of that mysterious temple roofing all
The space between God's altar and man's tomb.

KINSMAN.

That's what I say myself. Most certainly,
Love's the least part of marriage. Look you now,
Dear Cousin, at this marriage of your own
Which all of us rejoice at—I not least; —
Won from the wandering ways youth roams alone,
Fitly companion'd, taking with you all
That should accompany life's traveller, trains
Of goodly baggage, troops of trusty friends,
You enter here life's broad main highway, bound
For where life's sober business must begin
In serious earnest. You begin it well,
With all the necessary furniture;
Lord, as by these wise nuptials now you are,
Of half a province, with a princely name.
Think what you may be, should be, must be. Cousin,
The king is old and weak, and knows no more
Than a sick pauper in a hospital,
Plagued by a dozen vile diseases, each

Disputed by a dozen doctors, where
To turn, or whom to trust. Last year's new nostrums
Are all used up: last year's new minister
Totters already: and the hasty time
Wears out great reputations fast as men
Wear boots out on forced marches. You're the man,
The very man that's wanted . . .

ORVAL.

What! to smear
My white hands with the soils of your bad work,
That's daily wearying hands, no longer clean,
Of clumsy drudges, task'd in vain to keep
This execrable heap of rotten rubbish,
You call a system, just a little longer
Than, if the wind blows, it seems likely now
To hold together? I'll not touch it, Cousin.
I will not turn state tinker,—stop one hole,
And make a dozen; by a pauper prince
Paid from the plunder of a pauper people,
And call'd fine names, for doing foolish work,
By foolish folk. No, Father, you say well.
There's more in marriage than mere love: though love,
If true to one, is true to all. But if
I march forth to the battle-field of life
Bearing love's banner, it shall be to fight
Not in the rear, but in the van, and win
New realms for man.

KINSMAN.

I've but one word to say, then.

'Tis what a certain celebrated cook
Said to his too enthusiastic pupil:
'You push the pepper to fanaticism.'
But here comes Lady Orval.

FATHER ADAM.

Welcome, daughter!

BRIDE'S-LADIES (*entering with Lady Orval*).

Love us, Lord Orval, for the loveliness
We must restore to you; our sweet tasks done.

ORVAL.

I do, dear ladies, and most lovingly
For your loved kindnesses I thank you all.
Commend me to the Graces, who, I see,
When Venus lost her godhead, wisely came
To live with you.

MASTER ANDREW (*entering*).

My lord, the hall is thronged
By liegemen to the Orvals, vassals, friends
And guests, inquiring for their noble host,
With voices whose impatient eagerness
I know not how to answer.

ORVAL.

We are ready.
Give me thy hand, dear love. Throw wide the doors.
Thou tremblest, my Veronica?

VERONICA.

Stay by me!

(*The doors are thrown open.*)

RETAINERS.

Long live the Bride and Bridegroom! Louder, lads!
Long live our Lord and Lady!

ORVAL.

Thanks to all,
From us and ours. Fair welcome, worthy friends!
Joy's mouth is mute. Let music make amends.

ORVAL *and* VERONICA *pass down the hall saluting the guests. Music as the scene closes.*

END OF THE FIRST EPOCH.

SECOND EPOCH.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

SECOND EPOCH.

SCENE I.—*Night. Gothic Bedchamber. Bed with canopy, plumes, and heraldic ornaments, &c. A lamp burning dimly. In the bed Veronica asleep. Beside the bed, in a chair, Orval, also asleep.*

ORVAL (*speaking in his sleep*).

WHENCE com'st thou? wherefore art thou here again?
Thou whom, for many a wretched night and day,
Lone as an orphan in a stepdame's house,
Sad as a Sadducee beside a tomb,
Memory hath mourn'd! What rests 'twixt thee and me
Of aught resembling intercourse, less vain
Than fancy figures from a wind that sighs
Between two graves? Why dost thou haunt me thus?
What can I more? art thou not satisfied?
Why are the dead not dead? who can undo
What time hath done? who can win back the wind?
Beckon lost music from a broken lute?
Renew the redness of a last year's rose?
Or dig the sunken sunset from the deep?
Why lingerest thou, with those heart-breaking eyes?
What can my love avail thee? Life is lost.
Why beckonest thou? How can I follow thee?
Dost thou not see Prometheus' fate is mine?
The rock, the chain, the vulture at the heart!
Away!

(*Awaking*). Where am I? Ah . . . beside my wife!
My *wife?* . . . What is there in that little word
To make my flesh creep, and my conscience cry,
And wrap my life fast with infernal fire,
And change this pleasant earth into a hell?
Veronica! . . . thou light of a lost star,
Thou heaven unhallow'd, thou unhaloed saint,
Thou injured injury, thou sinless source
Of sin, thou faultlessness all full of faults,
Thou loss in gain, thou death in life! What woe
That wants a name yet shall have thine to wear?
Happy, thou sleepest, thou unhappy cause
Of sleeplessness. Sleep on! dream on! wake never!
Would I had never slept, or never waked!
For I have slept too long, or waked too soon,
Who, dreaming, dream'd thee . . . what thou never wast,
And, waking, wake to . . . what can never be!
I dream'd, and saw . . . . 'twas nothing but a dream!
I wake, and see . . . 'tis nothing like my dream!
Yet thou art fair, my lost Veronica:
Too fair thou art, too fair not to be woo'd,
And fond as fair . . . too fond not to be won:
Tender as evening air, true as a star;
Pure as the dewdrop of an April dawn;
Gentle, as creatures that were never wrong'd;
Faithful, as creatures that no wrong can change,
Because their faith is like a dead friend's love,
Something that's ever what it was . . . But She?
. . . O heavenly angels! Are these haunted eyes
The dupes, or the deceivers, of my heart?

EVIL SPIRIT (*rises*).

Woe! woe! thou hast betray'd me and thyself!
(*Evil Spirit sinks.*)

ORVAL (*starting up*).

Accursèd be the day, accurst the hour,
Wherein I wedded! Curst the hour, the day,
When I betray'd . . . madman, for what? for what?
The glorious bride of my immortal soul!
Whose beauty . . . Fool, to think Earth's fairest face
Could outface Heaven's!

VERONICA (*waking*).

Home of my heart! my Orval!
—Where is he? Am I alone? . . . Love, art thou there?
Thank God! thank God! I dream'd of thee. My dream
Was sad and strange. But thou art there, thank God!
What ails thee, love? Arisen, and clad already?
Thou should'st have waked me sooner. Day? is it day?

ORVAL.

Day? no, child. Night. Black midnight. Sleep again!
Turn thee upon thy pillow. Sleep! sleep fast!

VERONICA.

What ails thee, love? thy voice is strange: thine eyes
Are wild . . .

ORVAL.

Air, air! fresh air! An evil dream—
A feverish fancy—nothing. Heed me not.
Sleep, child. *Thou canst.* Sleep on. I'll walk awhile.
Heaven's breath upon my brow, the sight of stars,
The fresh cold rustling in the roofless fields
Of the first birds, will help this aching head.
Sleep fast, Veronica! The night is long.

(*He rushes out.*)

SCENE II.—*Night. A garden by a graveyard, as before.*

ORVAL (*walking with agitated gestures*).

O fool! fool! miserable, brainless beast!
What devil was in thee when thou didst that deed?
Who drugg'd the cup which thy besotted soul
Suck'd, as 'twere nectar, to the deadly dregs?
What bribed thee, brute, to be the murderer
Of thine own liberty? this double chain
Of never-changing custom, whose cramp links
So glitter'd in thy gross and greedy gaze
That thou didst take their gilded iron for gold,
And sell thyself to clutch them! Break it now
Thou canst not, though thou tear away the flesh
They cling to, and canker. Out on this cheat, time,
That wins eternity away from all
Who trust the present's fraudulent promise pledged
Upon a bankrupt future! What hath been
This life of mine, since that disastrous hour
Which made it mine no more? . . Death's leave to rot

Down to the grave by gradual dull decays,
And moulder slowly!

(*Clock strikes from the Castle tower.*)

Ha! is it not the hour
When I was wont to mount my throne? My throne!
Where is it? where my nimble ministers,
Those beautiful bright Spirits of burning orbs,
Whose congregated glories girt me round
With rows of starry brows intensely turn'd
To me, their monarch; hands in homage raised,
Radiant, to reach my sceptre's point that, where
I waved, it sway'd them, as the unseen wind
Around their ardent centre sways the tops
Of yearning flames: so yearn'd they all to me!
And my will ruled them all, like a young god.
Where are they vanisht from me? What new lord
Sits on the throne my vassals built for me,
Waving my wand? Minions, must I return
Like a repentant abdicated prince,
Yet hankering after power too rashly yielded,
To cry your pity, beg your leave to take
My crown again, and sue back your releast
And vagrant suffrage? Rather shall I be
Like some lost god, whom loss of empire goads,
Clad in fierce grandeur of a fallen fiend,
And hungry for old incense gone, to prowl
About the precincts of his perisht power,
With red eyes peering into empty bowls
Among his brazen shrines, and in the dark,
Where no more tapers burn, crouching to catch
And crush apostate priests. But no, by heaven!

My spirit, that long hath slept, awakes. Still mine
Is all that made me what I was—your lord!
Bright slaves, behold me! Tremble! appear! obey!
(*He waves his arms wildly.*)
(*After a pause*). They come not. I hear nothing but the wind
Sighing among the graves: and nothing see
But the wan clouds, whitening and darkening fast,
As through their melancholy membrane thin,
Like a faint impulse through a sick man's veins,
The flitting of the momentary moon
Comes and is gone. Nature draws down the veil
O'er her divine deep eyes, and like a stranger
Hastes from me. *Vox clamantis in deserto!*
I cry and there is none to answer me,
Call and none comes. The Spirit that once plagued Saul
Plagues me: and unto me too, as to him,
The voices of the oracles are dumb.
God! Thou art just. Thy priests have consecrated
The union of two human lives. But Thou?
Wilt Thou vouchsafe no severance of the bond
Which now unites two corpses?
(*Evil Spirit rises.*)
Ah; she comes!
Bright One, again thy breath is on my brow!
Again, again, those deep eyes in my soul
On their own trembling image are shining sad
As stars on a dark water! Calm and pale
Dictatress of my passionate destinies,
Beest thou but empty air, phantom or dream,
Or insubstantial vapour, the vext mind

Sends hovering up from the unquiet heat
Of its own burning thoughts, small care have I
To know aught else of thee than that *thou art;*
And O how beautiful thou art to me!
Child of mine inmost self, that comest thus,
In the last watches of the wakeful night,
To tempt the father that begat thee, . . O stay!
If thus it be, and thou, indeed, no more,
Image of all beätifying beauty,
Than the poor painted creature of the cloud
And habitant of hollow nothingness;
What then am I, from whose corporeal self
And palpable humanity, fair fiend,
Thou hast suckt out the nobler essences
To feed the light of those bewildering eyes?
This is the dross and refuse of a man,
Not I, not anything! So let me breathe
In that fine air thou breathest, . . else I die!
Thou hast dislodged me from myself . , I claim
Inhabitation of thine airy sphere.
All thine I am. Lead on. I follow thee.

EVIL SPIRIT.

I have heard. Remember thou,
Mortal, thine immortal vow!
Through the night air dark and hollow,
Where I lead thee, follow! follow!
Further than the rocky ledge
Of the stretch'd land's sea-girt edge,
Further than where heaven's clear cope
O'er the flat sea's end doth slope;
Higher than tree-top ever grew

Mountain reach'd, or wild bird flew;
Deeper than those depths of green
By the drowning seaman seen;
There where sun hath never set,
Never rose hath wither'd yet,
Beauty never ceased to be
Beautiful, nor freedom free:
There, where life is life for ever,
Love, the light it loses never;
Where, a bright immortal child,
Joy is ever fresh and wild,
Fed on flowers that never there
Winter strips of blossoms bare.
Would'st thou woo me? Hither to me!
Night and day must thou pursue me.
Come, my lover! Darkness cover
All the life whose light is over.
To me! Woo me! Would'st thou view me
As I am, pursue, pursue me!

ORVAL.

Rest! rest! O, if thou be the exprest Desire
Of all desires, the Thought of every thought,
Why rest no longer than a fleeting thought,
A vain desire?

THE VOICE OF VERONICA (*from a window in the Castle.*)

Dear heart, the night is chill.
Thou wilt take cold. Come back, come back, my own!
Without thy presence I am full of fears
In this drear dim old chamber, all alone.

O haste, dear heart! The morning breaks. Haste home!

ORVAL.

Anon! anon!

(*Evil Spirit sinks.*)

VOICE ON THE AIR (*dying away.*)

Weak mortal lover,
Fare thee well! The charm is over.
Soon to meet, though now to part,
Faithless soul, and feeble heart,
Hers thou art not: mine thou art.

ORVAL.

Gone! . . . Yet methought with promise of return.
And then? . . . Hers,—hers, whate'er She be! Farewell,
Home of my fathers, and thou native land;
Farewell, old garden where my boyhood play'd;
Farewell, friends, kindred, all . . . and farewell, she,
Form'd for all these, only not form'd for me!

VOICE FROM THE WINDOW ABOVE.

Orval!

ORVAL.

Anon! anon!

THE VOICE.

Prithee come soon.
I am not very strong just now, dear love,
Not since our little Muriel was born,
—Nor very well; nor able to say why
These faint cold seizures frighten me so much.
But come, thou dearest!

ORVAL.

And my child? . . . Gods! gods!
(*He re-enters the house.*)

SCENE III.—*An Antechamber in the Castle. A Nurse and Doctor.*

DOCTOR.

The child is a fine one—perfectly healthy—wants nothing but his natural nourishment. But you must be careful about your mistress.

NURSE.

O my dear lady! What is the matter with her, Doctor?

DOCTOR.

Nerves, only nerves. Nothing but nerves.

NURSE.

And what is nerves, Doctor?

DOCTOR.

Nerves are . . . humph! nerves are . . . (*looking at his watch*). Bless my soul, how late it is! Be good enough to see that Lady Orval takes the draught I have prescribed, every fourth hour. And above all, no excitement! no excitement! The child will do very well. Which is the way, my good woman? Thank you. Remember, no excitement. And the draught every four hours. (*Exit.*)

NURSE.

O my dear lady! if I knew what ailed her. Nerves? Sweet soul, 'tis the heart, I fear, that is breaking.

SCENE IV.—*Evening. A chamber in the Castle, lighted and richly furnished. High Gothic windows open. Through them a wild landscape is dimly visible. The night is sultry and cloudy with partial moonlight, frequently obscured. At one end of the chamber Veronica is seated by her harp. Near her, an infant asleep in a cradle. At the other end Orval, leaning against a window, and apparently watching the night: his back turned to Veronica.*

VERONICA.

I have sent to Father Adam.

ORVAL.

Eh? . . . ah, true,
The Priest. Quite right.

VERONICA.

He will be here at noon
To-morrow.

ORVAL.

In truth? at noon—to-morrow.

VERONICA.

At noon.
That's settled.

ORVAL.

Thanks.

VERONICA.

And all the Family,
Of course I mean both Families, attend.

ORVAL.

Good.

VERONICA.

Everything is now in readiness.
I have arranged it all myself.

ORVAL.

Thanks.

VERONICA.

All.
And made good Master Andrew jealous.

ORVAL.

No,
I am not jealous, child.

VERONICA.

Thou? . . . (ah, the old,
Old aching empty end of every effort!)
I have distributed the largesses:
The winter cloaks for the old women. . .

ORVAL.

Thanks.

VERONICA.

Such pretty hoods and ribbons for the young ones:
And food and drink and music for them all.

ORVAL.

Ay, food and drink.

VERONICA.

Dost thou approve?

ORVAL.

Of course.

VERONICA.

Dear God be thank'd! This ceremony over,
Our little Muriel will be a Christian.
Sleep, sleep, my little one! my pretty one!
How the child has been dreaming! Only see,
The little coverlet is all tumbled. Sleep,
My little Muriel, my pretty chick!

ORVAL.

Oh, the heat here! This house is stifling me.
There's thunder somewhere. I can feel it in me.
Would the storm only burst! . . Ouf! I shall choke.

VERONICA (*after watching in silence for some minutes her husband, whose back is turned, draws the harp to her, and sings*).

If my love but loved me, I,
What should I do? I that love him!
Rise, and live? or drop and die?
If I knew some way to prove him
Mine at last, hap then what may—
—Tone of voice, or glance of eye,
Could they make my love my lover,—

Should I even dare to try
Such a power? who now, to move him
Trying all I can, no way
To win him to me can discover,
For all my trying night and day!
(*With sudden vehemence*).
To-day, . . . to-morrow . . . yesterday . . . for ever!
What have I done? what have I done, sweet saints?
Orval! I cannot bear it. Look on me!
Dost thou not see that I am dying of it?
Not one word dost thou speak to me. Not one!
Not even one kind look, one answering smile.
Dost thou not even *see* what I am suffering?
All find me alter'd since . . . . ah, love, all eyes
Save thine are sad to see this withering change.
Hath no one told thee, love, how pale I am,
And thin, and weak, and wasted?

ORVAL.

(Surely now
The hour approaches!) On the contrary,
My love, I never saw you looking better.

VERONICA.

Alas! I think you see me not at all.
You do not see nor hear me. When I speak
You turn away impatient. When *you* speak
'Tis not to me. How have I wrong'd thee, Orval?
Thou dost wrong *me* most deeply. Whose the fault?
This morning I confess'd all sins of mine
With tears of sorrowfullest penitence
To Him that is more pitiful than thou.

For I have sinn'd to Him . . . often, to thee
Never! At the confessional I set
Bare in God's sight each sore and bleeding nerve
Of this bruised heart; and search'd out all its faults,
The secretest ones—that seem scarce faults at all
At first, or only faults like those friends find
In a loved face; who love it all the more
For just such blemishes as serve to break,
With here and there the quaint familiar turn
Of some defective feature, outlines else
Too faultless, they aver, to crave and get
The lenient pity, love soon turns to praise.
Such faults are worst. Love laps them round so well
With borrow'd lovelinesses that beguile
Kind Custom to conceal them for his sake!
And she contrives to baffle our best search,
Hiding them from us in our best-known selves,
Till, fed on unsuspected tolerance, oft,
Like savage creatures, tame in infancy,
Which yet no kindness can for long redeem
From their original wildness, these praised faults,
As we and they grow older, turn themselves
To drear deformities, revealed at last
By those unflattering looking-glasses, eyes
That love's departure leaves wide open. Alas!
Many such faults I found: but none, God knows,
None against thee! in all my soul no thought
That should offend thee, Orval.

ORVAL.

You have not
Offended me.

VERONICA.

Heaven knows how I have loved thee!

ORVAL.

And 'tis my duty also to love thee.

VERONICA.

O hush! . . . not *that* . . . not Duty . . . that drear word!
Harsh charity which the unwilling eye
And grudging heart dole out to orphan hopes.
Far better buried in the grave of love,
Than fed on such cold comfort. Rather say
Thou canst not love me, Orval. Truth is sad.
But truth is best. The bitter truth once faced,
Both will be freer from the fear of it.
And let the rest come on us as God wills!
I have heard say there is in all our bones
A humour Nature's kindly forethought keeps
Hid in them, with no seeming use at all,
Until you break them, when the fracture frees
This wholesome juice that helps her healing hand
To mend its mischief. May be, broken hearts
Have some such secret balm in readiness
To make the best of ruin. But do not, love,
Begin to hate me now, because you think
That you *must* love me, whom you cannot love.
Only the truth, love! I shall bear it somehow.
Only the truth! 'tis doubt that tortures most.
The truth! it could not even surprise me, love,
If I had counted on myself. But then,

I thought so little of myself at first,
So much of what was great and strong in you,
Which seem'd to cover me and keep me safe.
I always knew myself unworthy thee,
And always fear'd that you must find this out,
But not so soon. All seems so sudden now.
I should have been prepared .... .

ORVAL.

Veronica!

VERONICA.

Love, if you knew I recognized your right
To take back all the love I never claim'd,
Nor ever quite call'd mine, you'd have no cause
To hate me thus.

ORVAL.

Veronica!

VERONICA.

Not me,
Not me, have pity upon! But .... O my husband,
(*Rushes to the cradle*)
This . . innocent remnant of my wretched love,
That never wrong'd thee ... Think! it is God's gift,
Not mine, not mine! O father, look on it,
It is thine own! it is thyself!
(*She kneels.*)

ORVAL.

Tears? prayers?
Clasp'd hands? and supplicating sobs? Wife, wife,
What have I said, what have I done, to bring

This vehement battery of most stormy speech
And fierce reproach upon me? Prithee rise.

VERONICA.

Nay, not till, on the altar I build here
To patience, all the love I render back
With unreproachful tears, the duty too,
That cannot comfort me who claim it not,
Be dedicated to thy child, whose birth
Was the beginning of my burial. Orval,
Swear thou wilt love thy son!

ORVAL.

Him? . . and thee too!
I love ye both. Believe it.
(*He stoops to kiss her.*)

EVIL SPIRIT (*rises*).

Hail, my lover!
Our bridal hour is come. Away with me,
There, whence thy sighs have won me!

VERONICA (*flinging herself into his arms*).

Husband!

THE SPIRIT.

Haste!
(*The storm bursts outside.*)

VERONICA.

Orval! that crash! the thunder-bolt hath fallen
Upon our roof. The terrible lightning flash
Is in mine eyes!

ORVAL.

How fair thou art! how fair,
Bright mystery! ethereal sorceress!
Thine eyes are wells of wonder! thy loose locks
Gold labyrinths wherein love wanders lost!
Ripe budding kisses, bright with crimson dew,
And bathed in breathing balm, are thy red lips!
And thy looks draw me, fill'd with music, forth
In response to them, as a minstrel's hand
Draws hidden tune out of a throbbing lute.

VERONICA.

Help! help, my husband! all the air is fire.
I burn! I stifle! Help!

ORVAL.

Once more, once more,
That voice, though I should die to hear it!

THE SPIRIT.

She
That would retain thee must, herself, depart,
With all things that decay. Her little life
Is but a dying taper's smoke. Her love
A leaf that falls before the gust of time,
Confounded with a million like it, lost
And trodden down into the common clay.
Her beauty is the heritage of the worm;
Her youth the play and sparkle of a stream
Which soon the winter of old age shall freeze.
I am immortal.

VERONICA.

Orval, Orval! Saints,
Save us, . . save *him*, my husband! The house burns.
The choking smoke! the scorching flame! Speak, Orval,
What seest thou yonder with those staring eyes
Fixt on the fearful fiery glare? Help! help!

ORVAL.

Hush, woman! hush! Creature of clay, blaspheme not!
Daughter of Eve, thou standest in the light
Of that Divine Ideal, in whose image
The Almighty One conceived thee, too. But thou,
Even in thy mother's womb, woman, hast heard
The whisper of the serpent, and thou art
——That which thou art!

THE SPIRIT.

Come!

(*Veronica swoons*).

ORVAL.

Farewell, clay! I follow.

SCENE V.—*Early Dawn. High mountain landscape.*

ORVAL (*ascending*).

It spreads before me, opens out on me,
And round me,—all I have loved, and long'd to lose
The life of my life in, winning it! My heart
Leaps like a river-god's what time he hears,

Fluttering the cold reeds of his frozen banks,
The first, faint, solitary kingfisher:
And all at once his drowsy godhead awakes,
And he, no blind, frost-bitten brooklet now,
But Ocean's lusty child, shakes free his limbs
Of their cold chains, which frowning Tanaïs takes,
And hastes to find, in some bright island bay
Far off, the sportive sea-maid that he loves.

VOICE IN THE AIR.

Hither to me! hither to me!

ORVAL.

Still on,
Higher I mount, and higher: as a strong star,
Stopp'd by no cloud that clings to the world's edge
Where night's lees settle. Far behind me fades,
And far beneath me, the loath'd life I leave.
Ha! miserable insects, misnamed men,
Wretchedest worms that never yet had wings
To save you from yourselves, that sting each other!
Swarm on, sting on! and, in the dust that breeds ye,
Grovel, and grope, and crawl, and die content!
For once, your prey escapes you.

VOICE IN THE AIR.

Follow! follow!
Higher! still higher, follow!

ORVAL.

I follow.. Lead!

SCENE VI.—*Noon. Within the Church. Veronica, priest, sponsors, nurse, and child. Guests, kinsmen, and retainers, &c.—Organ music.*

A GUEST.

So hotly bidden, and so coldly thank'd!
Strange, that Lord Orval comes not!

ANOTHER.

Strange, if he
Were *not* strange! Doubtless, he is all this while
Penning some page of an immortal poem,
Resolved that nothing but the end of the world,
Which some folks think at hand, shall interrupt him,
And break off his best strophe.

A THIRD.

Hush! Look yonder.
How woeful white our hostess. . . . .

THE FIRST.

Ay! she seems
In pain, poor lady. What a wretched face!

THE SECOND.

She has not spoken yet to any of us.

THE FIRST.

And what strange eyes!

THE THIRD.

Eyes! do you call them eyes?
They glow like pits of fire where nameless things,
That died unblest, are being burn'd away.

THE FIRST.

What finely-carven features!

THE SECOND.

Yes, but carved
From some clear stuff, not like a woman's flesh,
And colour'd like half-faded white-rose leaves.
'Tis all too thin, and wan, and wanting blood,
To take my taste. No fulness, and no flush!
A watery half-moon in a wintry sky
Looks less uncomfortably cold. And . . . . well,
I never in the eyes of a sane woman
Saw such a strange unsatisfied regard.

A FOURTH.

Humph! this begins to look less festival
Than funeral. Or, if a feast, a strange one,
Like Timon's last . . . a putting a good face

THE SECOND.

On a bad case.

THE FOURTH.

And I that (pity me!)
Declined a breakfast with an epicure
Just to please Orval!

THE FIRST.

Listen!

THE PRIEST.

Muriel, wilt thou
Receive the holy baptism of Christ?

SPONSORS.

I will.

FIRST GUEST.

Look! look! how those wild eyes wax wide,
And flash with formidable intensity!

THE SECOND.

She stretches out her arms toward the child.
What is she muttering? Mark her. She will speak.
But . . . . . Gracious heavens!

THE FOURTH.

Aha! did I not say it,
'There's something here amiss'?

FIRST.

She staggers.

THIRD.

Marquis,
Your arm! You are the nearest of us. Quick,
Or she will fall!

PRIEST.

Muriel, dost thou renounce
The devil and all his works? dost thou renounce
The pomps and vanities of this wicked world,
And all the sinful lusts of the flesh?

SPONSORS.

I do.

FOURTH GUEST.

'Faith, that's a large concession!

FIRST.

Hush! Those lips
Struggle . . . that white face twitches. What is she saying?

VERONICA.

Muriel, receive her blessing, who unblest
Hath given to thee, what unto her was given
To grieve for, got—the bitter gift of life!
For I, that did in sorrow bear thee, most
Do sorrow that thou must much sorrow bear.
Yet one thing is reveal'd, which comforts me:
Begot in Sorrow, shalt thou Song beget.
So shall thy father scorn thee not, as me
He scorns,—for songless sadness: and so God
Shall hear thy voice among the morning stars,
And in between the palms of Paradise,
And where the singing of those Spirits sounds
To whom God listens,—and forget thee not,
As me He hath forgotten. Powers shall be
About thee, cohorts through a perilous land,
And cloud by day, and fire by night. . . .
Ha, fiends!
Can all the sworded Seraphs and sentinel Saints,
That stand on guard by this baptismal font,
Not keep those plucking fingers from their prey?
Son, have the Black Ones got thee? Touch him not!
The sign is on his forehead. Know your lord.
This is God's crownèd Poet!

SPONSORS.

What wild words
Are these? and art thou mad, Veronica?

Revere these solemn precincts, nor insult
God's House, thyself, and us.

VERONICA.

They hold him not.
Wings hath he, like a dove's, to flee away
And be at rest. God gave him those dove's wings.
He is God's gracious bird, that sang to us
A little while, before the morning light
Was quench'd in cloud. But he is fled away.
God hides him safe.

PRIEST.

Lady, this violent speech
Wastes all our minds in fearful wonder; frights
From her chaste cells, whose incensed masonry
Is dim with the pure breath of pious thoughts,
The solemn echo that inhabits here,
Unused to answer sinful cries; plucks down
The heavenward wings of holy prayer; and kills
The startled soul of sanctity.
Hell's power
Shall not prevail against this sign. Behold!
Satan, I charge thee by the Name I serve,
Come out of her! Let every Christian soul
Pray for her peace. Woman . . . you do forego
The reverence owed yourself, to outrage thus
Our sacred office, and the temple of God.
Anathema Sathanas! Vade retro!

RELATIONS (*muttering*).

Indecent! . . . Scandalous! . . . Intolerable!

She hath disgraced us all. . . Where's Orval? . . .
Shame!
Drag her away! . . . What devil hath got into her? . .
Can no one shut those lips? . . .

VERONICA.

Remember, Muriel!
Remember, or my curse be on thee, son!
For the black wings are buzzing after us.
If the black fingers catch thee by the hair,
I know where they will drag thee! Higher yet!
Fly higher yet! Show them the crown God girt
About thy forehead. How I pray'd for that!
And now it glitters clear . . . a crown of stars,
And every star with mystic music fill'd!
Show them thy crown, O Poet, and they will crouch,
And so we shall escape them. Fly! fly! fly!
Farewell, my dove. I cannot follow thee.
Thou hast such nimble wings, thou bird of God.
And Heaven is so far off. Ah, turn! they throng
Faster and faster. Save me!

GUESTS.

Look to her!
Oh miserable lady!

(*Veronica falls insensible.*)

FIRST GUEST.

Come away!
Something hath happen'd in the House of Orval
Which never should have been.

FOURTH.

Ah, said I not
'Something is here amiss'?

SECOND.

In any case,
Our presence, I conceive, will be less thank'd
Than our departure. After you, my lord.

FIRST.

Your Excellency first.

SECOND.

Nay, then, indeed,
If you insist . . .

THIRD.

Marquis!

FOURTH.

Ten thousand thanks.
Exquisite flavour! How do you call this snuff?

THIRD.

I had it from the old king: and he's a judge.
Well, friend, you may be, after all, in time
To eat your breakfast with your epicure.

FIRST.

Come, gentlemen. Unwilling, have we been,
As unwisht, witnesses of this sad scene.

SCENE VII.—*Cloud, crag, and precipice, above a stormy sea.*

ORVAL (*still ascending*).

Where is she? Whither fleeted, on the wind
That whips me through this wither'd waste? Where am I?
Have they a name for men to know them by,
These desert steeps, ... Calpe, or Caucasus,
Atlas, or utmost Thule's mountain-tops
Mark'd on no mariner's chart? One thing is sure;
That never, even in dream, I trod, before,
The dreadful pavement of this dizzy path
That winds I know not where: never beheld
The broken margent of that savage sea
That in his beachèd basin, far below,
Boils like Hell's cauldron; nor yon livid peak
Peering and disappearing through those gaps
Of restless cloud, tormented by the wind.
How horribly the huge stone's solid bulk
Seems hovering in the gust above my head!
Fierce as Death's altar, wreathed for sacrifice
With snaky shapes that round it, gaping, twine.
And what are *they?* Troops of pale ghostly priests,
Or but fantastic vapours, sweeping round
With hooded heads, and waving arms? whose dance
About their dismal altar floats in time
To . . . what low humming sound of surly song
Comes from the abyss to cheer them? Am I, then,
The victim these are waiting? the one thing
Yet wanting to complete their ghastly rites?

I care not. I must on. Here is no rest.
Already have I cross'd the groaning tract
Of thunder, that with dense blue drench blots all
The blighted plain out. Far beneath me, borne
About these fang'd and crooked crags, I hear
Faint noises only, as ever and anon
Between black sullen shores of gulfy cloud
There runs, and breaks, and falls, a pallid sea
Of momentary fire. Still on! still on!
The few lean firs, and solitary pines,
That struggled, few and fewer, as on I pass'd,
To keep pace with me, all have fallen away.
I have outstript them, scarcely heeding how
They stopp'd aghast, dejected, gazing where
They dared not clamber. Nature's self cried 'Halt!
I can no further go!' Yet on went I,
And still must on,—still on, while aught is left
Above me where man's foot may tread. Still on!

A VOICE IN THE AIR.

Follow!

ORVAL.

I follow.

THE VOICE.

Haste!

ORVAL.

Where art thou?

THE VOICE.

Here.

ORVAL.

Ever beyond!

THE VOICE.

Hither to me!

ORVAL.

At last
Behold the summit! Further pathway none
To foot of man, beyond the utmost edge
Of this sheer precipice, earth's reach'd end vouchsafes.
Here must I rest. Here where, save stormy winds,
None ever mounted. Leagues below me, wheels
The wild sea eagle in his highest flight.
Higher than Babel's builders ever built
I have attain'd.

VOICE IN THE AIR.

Hither to me!

ORVAL.

Where art thou?

THE VOICE.

I wait thee, O my lover!

ORVAL.

But far off
Thou art already. And I cannot pass
Where pathway none can be. Nor from myself
Spin, spiderlike, a passage through the vast
And vacant air to reach thee. I have climb'd
The sudden sidewall of the world. Beyond
Is nothing but the abyss.

ANOTHER VOICE (*nearer, and louder*).

Where are thy wings?

ORVAL.

Already dost thou flout me, mocking fiend?

THE SECOND VOICE.

Is not thy soul immortal, infinite,
As thy desire, which on a single thought
Can soar beyond the battlements of space,
And, swifter than the speed of shooting stars,
Traverse the empyrean? Yet dost thou cling,
Fear's captive, to some few bare inches left
Of Earth's base dust? What! art thou Earth's at last,
Poor cowering piece of most presumptuous clay,
That would'st have only Heaven? Advance! advance!
Why dost thou shrink? Stopp'd by a little stone,
Scared by a passing wind! Ha, doth thy flesh
Shiver, thy bones ache, in the buffeting blast,
Great Spirit? searcher of the unsearchable,
Climber of the inaccessible! Dost fear?
Dost falter? thou, the undaunted!

ORVAL.

Insolent voice,
I falter not. Show but thyself. Appear
In any form however horrible!
Take substance, and confront me! Leave thy lair
In the loose element . . . come forth . . . approach,
That I may crush thee! Dare me to the endeavour,
And if I quail before thee, never more

May I behold the beauty I would embrace!
I fear thee not.

THE FIRST VOICE.

Lean on me. Take my hand,
And it shall guide thee.

(*The Phantom of the Voice appears beyond the precipice.*)

ORVAL.

Heaven and earth! . . . . Fast, fast,
The flowers from off those glorious tresses fall,
And turn themselves to venomous crawling things,
With bloated pouches, and thick-speckled skins,
And fangs that flicker on the clammy crag!

THE PHANTOM.

Haste, O my lover, haste! I wait thee. Come!

ORVAL.

Great God! . . . What hideous whirlwind shakes, and rends
To rags, the shuddering splendour of that robe?

THE PHANTOM.

Hither to me! Why dost thou linger? Come,
My wooer, my wild lover, my bright lord!

ORVAL.

The whirling sleet is white on her wet hair.
How bony grows the beauty of that breast!

THE PHANTOM.

Hast thou forgot thy vow? Art thou not mine?
Come, traitor! Come!

ORVAL.

O horrible! horrible!
The sudden lightning hath stabb'd out her eyes.

VOICE (*wailing away*).

Blind! blind for evermore! Eternal dark!

VOICES OF EVIL SPIRITS (*in the whirlwind*).

Away now, thou ancient damnation!
Thy task is accomplisht. Farewell!
Return to thine old habitation,
And abide in the nethermost Hell.
Gone is the robe we gave thee,
Crumbled thy crown:
Never a prayer can save thee.
Drop, though it cannot lave thee,
Into Lethe! Down, and drown!
And thou, dost thou shrink, the unshrinking?
Descend! Thou hast mounted in vain.
For each mariner shipwreckt, and sinking,
There is room in the infinite main.
Others, ere thou, have striven
And fail'd. Not first
Nor last art thou, to whom Heaven,
For the profit of Hell, hath given
The pride that in Hell is curst.

ORVAL.

My God, for this then am I lost—that I,
The earth-born, have unearthly beauty loved
Better than all earth gave me? follow'd this,
Trusted in this, suffer'd for this! for this,

Forsaking all, am I forsaken now
By that for which all else I have forsaken?
Defrauded by I know not what false fiend
Whose form was like an angel's fashion'd!

VOICES OF EVIL SPIRITS.

Stay!
This fool hath yet a word to say,
Lest God hear him, still be near him!
We are watching for our prey.
The soul that hath wooed her is blind
As the Hell that hath won our wan elf.
The wonder was he of mankind,
Who in wonderment worshipt himself;
And still, though the idol he worshipt be
Broken, unbrokenly worships he.
Prate on! we hear thee exulting,
Add folly to folly, and sin
To sin, proud fool, insulting
The Heaven thou could'st not win.
That Heaven lay near thee, and round thee.
Thou hadst but to enter, and dwell
Content in the Paradise found thee,
And barter'd by thee for Hell.

ORVAL.

For this, you unjust skies? for this . . . . Vain! vain!
The last hour locks me round. The surcharged blast
Spouts blinding storm. The wroth sea roars, and rises
Higher and higher, as though the dead men's hearts
Were heaving underneath it. Rock by rock,
The ruin'd land sinks: and a fervid light,

More dismal than all blackest blackness, burns
The withering world's red shrivell'd edges bare
Of aught save that strange horror which begins
Where all else ends. It rises still, that sea!
White fire, and whirling water, and hissing wind,
And crackling crag, in one red gulf of Hell
Confounded, and, confounding all things else!
Merciless and o'erwhelming elements,
Man never was your master! Unseen hands
Are hugging me. And on my shoulder hangs
The dragging fiend. Help! help, thou Heavenly One!

EVIL SPIRITS.

Sons of the Father of lies,
Rejoice! we have play'd for, and won him.
He struggles, and groans, and cries:
But the weight of our falsehood is on him.
Round him and over him
Hover, and cover him,
Baffle, bewilder, and drag him down!
If he should break from the net we throw for him,
Still shall we know him again for our own.
Our mark he beareth,
Wherever he fareth:
We have bitten it deeper than flesh and bone:
Tears though he weep on it,
Tears shall but deepen it,
Tears that bewail what they cannot atone!
Time shall harden it,
Lest God pardon it.
When we return for him so shall we find him.

Shatter the spell now! Unblind, unbind him,
Loosen, and launch him, and leave him alone!

ORVAL.

The strife is futile. My brain breaks. The abyss
Lays out long hands upon me. Ah, at last
My soul sees clear. At last, and yet too late!
Omnipotent one, must it be ever thus,
And ever shall Thy Foe triumphant be?

GUARDIAN ANGEL (*passing above*).

Peace, wild winds and stormy waters!
Peace, thou troubled soul, to thee!
Pride that snares, and Sin that slaughters,
Passion's phrenzied sons and daughters,
Pass, and set this sinner free!

Holy dew, from Heaven alighted,
Ere in childhood Faith began,
Brighten Faith in manhood blighted!
Holy symbol, sign'd and slighted,
For the child's sake, save the man!

Turn thee to the ancient places!
Holy angels undefiled
Live in loving human faces.
Griefs are given to thee for graces,
And for guide a little child.

From the grave though Love impeach thee
For the loveless years of yore,
From the cradle Love shall reach thee
Pardoning hands to turn and teach thee.
Go in peace, and sin no more.

SCENE VIII.—*Gothic chamber in the Castle of Orval—same as in Scene IV.*

ORVAL (*entering hurriedly, followed by servants*).

Where is your mistress, I say?

A SERVANT.

Lady Orval has been ill, my lord.

ORVAL.

Not in her chamber! where is she? Speak.

ANOTHER SERVANT

Our Lady left the Castle yesterday.

ORVAL.

Left? gone? where? 'sdeath, sirrah, why dost thou answer not? Speak, you staring fool! Are you all dumb? Zounds! do you know me? Am I a man to be mocked by mine own valets? Andrew! Where is Andrew?

SERVANTS (*whispering*).

Ay, Master Andrew, go forward. Tell him thou. We dare not

ANDREW.

(I would I were a tinker's ass! I had rather carry tin kettles than this news. O Lord, is it not the very day our poor Lady first came to the Castle? I shall never get it off my heart. It lies there as heavy as lead.)

ORVAL.

Andrew!

ANDREW.

Ay, my lord.

ORVAL.

Come hither, Andrew.

ANDREW.

Ay, my lord.

ORVAL.

Nearer, Andrew.

ANDREW.

Ay, my lord. (It will choke me. It sticks like a fish-bone in a man's gullet.)

ORVAL.

So, Andrew. Art thou too in the conspiracy? Where is thy lady? Devils in hell! dost thou hear me, fellow?

ANDREW.

No, my lord, ay, my lord.

ORVAL.

Where is she gone?

ANDREW.

Gone! Ay, my lord. Indeed, to be sure. And 'tis there the pity of it, I say.

ORVAL.

Knave, thou shalt smart for this. Where is my wife?

ANDREW.

Gone, my lord.

ORVAL.

Where?

ANDREW.

Away, my lord.

ORVAL.

The witch catch thee! Whither, sirrah?

ANDREW.

To the Mad-House.

(*Exeunt servants hastily.*)

ORVAL (*after a long pause*).

Veronica! Veronica! . . . . Eh? . . . hark!
Was it her voice there? . . . No . . . Veronica!
Gone? gone? . . . What said those men to me, just now?
Impossible! . . . Oh, she but hides herself.
I should have guess'd that sooner. A child's trick,
Poor girl, to punish me for my long absence.
Ah, but this lasts too long. Veronica!
Veronica! . . . Enough! enough! . . . Forgive!
Forget! . . I do implore thee, love! . . . No sound,
And surely I search'd everywhere . . . No trace!
And those men's faces . . . . . Oh no, no! my God,
That were too horrible!
Hilo! hilo! Without!
Without! . . . No voice . . . no footstep . . . no reply!
The house is empty.

And the woman to whom
I vow'd a faithful heart, a life of love,

And loving care . . . Devil! have I cast her, living,
Into the dwelling of the damn'd? It was
So pure a thing, so innocent and glad!
Perfectly fair and good, to me God gave her.
What have I done with her? Where is she now?
Ha! ha! . . . . Who laugh'd then? . . . was it I myself?
Mad? . . is it I, not she, that's mad? . . Ah no,
I dare not hope that. It would be too just,
Therefore too merciful. I can reason yet,
And reasonably know myself a wretch.
There is no blood upon these hands of mine.
Why do they feel so like a murderer's?
Thou cursèd hand! thou hast kill'd the innocent.
Quick, then, and kill the guilty!

(*Draws his dagger.*)

Out, thou sharp
Straightforward justicer!

(*Sinking his hand.*)

Nay! even thou
Would'st be too lenient. There's no point o' the law
Thou dost administer can reach and strike
The original culprit. Silly lancet, all
Thy simple surgeoning cures nothing. Here
There is an ulcer which thou canst not probe.
The soul! the soul! I cannot kill the soul!
Back to thy case!

(*He sheathes the dagger.*)

What am I, then? In Hell
What name shall devils invent for one more damn'd
Already than Hell's devilishest? . . . And she?

Where now is laid that saintly head? What cries
Of horror and of infamy now shame
Those modest ears? That brow so calm . . . that lip
So innocently smiling . . . changed, O Heaven!
Changed . . . and by me . . . to what? Ah wretched
wife,
Didst thou send forth, into the wilderness
Where God himself was tempted, and where all
Save He have perish'd, thy poor simple mind
To seek me, and hast lost it thus?

A VOICE FROM BELOW.

Ha! ha!
Optime! Optime! O what a theme
For a tremendous poem! What a rare
Dramatic genius! Bravo!

ORVAL.

Ah, the voice
Of Satan still! Peace, mocking fiend.
What, ho!
My horse! my pistols! ho!
To horse! to horse!
(*Rushes out.*)

SCENE IX.—*In the house of one of the Orval Family. Young and Old Kinsmen.*

YOUNG KINSMAN.

I have been to the castle, but could learn no more than that Orval had returned, and left it suddenly. I am off to the camp this evening. Perhaps when you

see him you will oblige me by mentioning to him the trifling service I have been so fortunate as to have had it in my power to render him. I make a point of neglecting no opportunity to help those who can help me. And I like to show respect for the Head of our House, and a due concern for the dignity of all its members.

OLD KINSMAN.

Humph! But really I have half forgotten what it was all about.

YOUNG KINSMAN.

You remember that shocking scene in the church the other day—and all that has happened since? Well, one of those daily scribblers—fellows who live in garrets pelting princely names with onion peel,—contrived to get hold of the story—wrote and printed it, after his own fashion—not omitting our Cousin's name even, in one of his insolent pamphlets, and

OLD KINSMAN.

All the world read it.—I remember. The publisher made a fortune by it. Go on.

YOUNG KINSMAN.

I found out the hole where this vermin burrowed. And sent my valet to cudgel the rascal. The castigation was a sound one.

OLD KINSMAN.

Well?

YOUNG KINSMAN.

Whereupon my man . . . you will hardly believe it, . . . sends me a challenge.

OLD KINSMAN.

Good heavens! You did not accept it?

YOUNG KINSMAN.

Of course not. How could I? I should have been delighted to have had the honour of running any gentleman through the body to oblige Orval. But a fellow with no name—except on a title-page—whose father nobody knows, and whose mother everybody might have known.—A poor devil who must have pawned his shirt, if he had one, for the loan of a sword to cross with mine . . .

OLD KINSMAN.

Oh certainly—quite impossible—a very presumptuous fellow. But what did you do?

YOUNG KINSMAN.

Put myself to infinite trouble—pray tell Orval—went to town for no other purpose—saw the minister—and had my man lodged in gaol the same evening; where he is safe for life. And what is more, I flatter myself that I have not only arranged this little private matter promptly and satisfactorily, but also that it has enabled me to become a public benefactor. For the rascal, when he was arrested, had already begun the publication of twelve volumes of periodical blasphemy and sedition, which he entitled a Dictionary of the Sciences (he is one of those confoundedly popular busybodies who profess to know everything, and who really know nobody), but which was in fact nothing less than a series of insidious and venomous attacks

upon Religion and Aristocracy, Church and State, and everything else that is sacred. I feel that I have extinguished a volcano. And as for the publisher of that libel . . Trust me, he will make no more fortunes out of the affairs of our Family. The man is ruined.

OLD KINSMAN.

Oh, that is your man, is it? I know him well—his books, I mean. A dangerous dog. For he writes wittily, and, it must be confessed, with extreme beauty of style. This sort of writers is the most dangerous of all. Wit and elegance should not be tolerated except in the well-born. Ministers make a huge mistake in dealing with the press. They prohibit coarse language, vulgar virulence, sheer downright stupid abuse: all of which are harmless enough. And they tolerate refinement, grace, wit, good taste; which are damnably dangerous. I look upon all these popular penmen as so many tailors, whose sly purpose it is to cut out and put together the patchwork of society after the pattern of their own interests. They desire, of course, to stitch their frieze so fast to our velvet, that all may look one and the same piece: we, on the contrary, to prevent such ignoble contact. Yet you prohibit the use of blunt bodkin, and coarse packthread, that make no way at all through such a piece of work; which needs delicate handling. And you allow the sharp needle that flits fast, and the fine silk that goes through. A mistake. Wit is the only instrument nice enough to carry the social thread safely from top to bottom, and tack the frieze to the velvet so tight, that the seam between them is invisible.

YOUNG KINSMAN.

Wit or no wit . . if I were the State,

OLD KINSMAN.

The State would be even more in debt than it is. But what then?

YOUNG KINSMAN.

I would hang all writers, printers, and publishers.

OLD KINSMAN.

No use. The stream of time is troubled to the depth, and the mud must come to the surface somehow. We must try to improve the people by degrees: for, I doubt we cannot chain it up much longer, and the cur is by no means fit to go loose. *Fideliter dedicisse* . . . .

YOUNG KINSMAN.

Improve the people! Well, I saw a peasant broken on the wheel yesterday for stabbing an abbot—a young man of one of our best families—who had kindly improved the condition of the brute's sister.

OLD KINSMAN.

Humph! You have acted very becomingly. And I will tell Orval if I see him. Anything more? It is time for my bath and chocolate.

YOUNG KINSMAN.

Thanks. I will not detain you.

OLD KINSMAN.

Detain *me*, young gentleman?

YOUNG KINSMAN.

Ten thousand pardons. I meant to say I kiss your hand, Uncle. So delighted you approve. If you will kindly tell Orval. Thanks. My coach is at the door. An infinite number of good days to you, Uncle!

SCENE X.—*Corridor in a Mad-House.*

WIFE OF THE MAD-HOUSE DOCTOR (*with a bunch of keys, followed by Orval*).

No, I think not, Sir. They tell me there is no hope of the lady's recovery. Poor thing! I am grieved that my husband is not here. It would have given him the greatest satisfaction to have the honour of waiting on your worship. He could have explained to you, better than I, the nature of this malady. Interesting case. My husband, Sir, has been very successful in the treatment of this kind of insanity. He has given much study to the subject. Perhaps you have read his book upon the Brain? 'Tis much admired. But the worst cases—cases like this, I fear, are quite incurable. Quite. This way, if you please, Sir. You won't mind the noise? There is no danger. 'Tis only Howling Tom. A violent case, very. But we keep him chained. The lady, poor dear, is quiet enough. Pray, Sir, observe the view from that window. The finest in this part of the country. Indeed, we are very healthily situated. But the establishment is large, Sir. Large, dear me, and costs a deal to keep

up. And so little encouragement! One year we accommodated no less than four hundred lunatics, and not a sixpence from Government. Some of them paupers, too. For the Parish obliges us to receive them. But that sort of patients seldom lives long. Which is the Lord's mercy. To be sure, one makes something, when the season is good, by the gardens and orchards. Our pears are especially successful. Some of our patients are vastly fond of gardening, Sir. And we occupy them that way. Only the milder sort, of course. Bless your heart, there's a young man here that is a smart hand at pruning wall fruit. Yet for all that, he will swear you by St Christopher that he is a king's bastard. But there's no harm in him. Pray, Sir, is it true that the lady's husband ran away in the night with another gentleman's lady? Well, I dare say, if the lady had been married as long as I—and that's full thirty years; thirty years, Sir, come next Lady-day—she would not have taken it so mightily to heart. In truth, she looks but a child. This is a strange world. Is it not, Sir? The gallery to the right, if you please. We have been thin, very thin, this year. But perhaps we shall do better by and by. Let us all hope for the best. That's what I say, Sir. And the Lord be bountiful to them that deserve it. Now, Sir. This way. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE XI.—*In the Mad-House. High vaulted Chamber barely furnished. Window barred. On a low wooden sofa Veronica is lying. Orval, with the Doctor's wife, at the door.*

ORVAL.

Leave me alone with her!

DOCTOR'S WIFE.

I do not dare.
Sir, if my husband knew . . .

ORVAL.

Tush, woman! away!
Let none dare come 'twixt her and me. Stand back.
(*Pushes her out, and enters; shutting the door behind him.*)

VOICE FROM THE CELLS ABOVE.

You have chain'd up your God! You have crucified Christ Jesus!

VOICE FROM THE CELLS BELOW.

To the gallows, to the block,
With every old grey head that wears a crown!
Princes, and priests, and men with noble names,
And all that's clad in purple, and wears soft raiment,
All they whose feet go delicately, all they
Whose lips are fed on dainty fare,—I doom.
The time is come to liberate mankind,
And by me only must the blow be struck.

VOICE FROM THE RIGHT.

Down on your knees, you dogs! Down in the dust
Before your lord and master! Lick my feet.
Grovel and fawn! For, by the grace of God,
I only, I myself, and none but I,
Am your legitimate sovereign. Cringe, you curs!

VOICE FROM THE LEFT.

The red stars start and plunge. The skinny moon
Time hath forgot to feed with sallow fire,
And she is dead: and on her pucker'd cheek
Blue plague-spots sprout. He hath arrived at last,
The long-hair'd comet with a hungry eye,
That, shark-like, swims about all drowning worlds.
The great and terrible Judgment Day is at hand.
Thou that art in the city, flee away!
Thou that art in the mountain, hide thyself!
And woe be to the breasts that do give suck!
Time is condemn'd: for he hath slain his sons.
The secrets of all hearts shall soon be known.
Thou sea, give up thy dead!

ORVAL.

Veronica!
Dost thou not know me?

VERONICA.

Ay. Have I not sworn
Fidelity to thee . . . and love . . . till death?

ORVAL.

Give me thy hand, love. Let us fly this place.

VERONICA.

I cannot. All's so weary here. I think
My heart hath got into my head. It feels
So full, . . and oh, so heavy! and I am weak:
I cannot bear the weight of it.

ORVAL.

One step,
But one! Lean on me. All's prepared. One step!
The horses wait below. Lean on me, sweet.
So . . . I will bear thee.

VERONICA.

Nay, let me rest here.
I am very weary, lord. I have gone far,
And suffer'd much. Thou seest how weak I am.
I will obey thee, lord. But I need time.
I am slow of effort, and change ever came
To me unkindly, and was hard to bear.
Be patient with me, lord. If I rest here
A little while, I think that presently
I shall grow worthy of thee.

ORVAL.

O my God!

VERONICA.

God? Yes. How I have pray'd to God for this!
Three nights and days, unceasing . . . . but they seem'd
Three lives and deaths of agony. Then, at last
God heard me.

ORVAL.

I am judged: and Hell begins.

VERONICA.

And sent a sudden Spirit to comfort me,
And take me out of trouble, and teach me words
That can make worlds—wonderful worlds! wherein
'Tis possible to enter and escape
From any kind of this world's wretchedness,
If one knows how. For he is full of eyes
And voices, and his breath is burning fire.
So that there came a change: and I began
To see those bright surprising things which God
Sees, unsurprised, for ever. For, when first
Thou hadst left me, lord, and I was all alone,
And knew that I must still be all alone
For evermore—even though new things should come
To sit beside me, speaking with feign'd tones,
And trying all they can, for my sad sake,
To look like old things—then I pray'd, 'O God,
Grant me,' . . I pray'd, . . 'since all things else are gone,
Never to come again, that he may come
Who never came before,—the Spirit with eyes
And voices—he, that on his lips hath song,
And vision in his looks,—that I may see,
Though I have lost it, what life *might* have been.
Lest even in Heaven I should be ignorant.'

ORVAL.

For her sake, not for mine, have pity, O God!

VERONICA.

And this God granted to me. For my prayer
Was strong. And on the third sad day, dear lord,
(Because, I think, God wisht me worthier thee)
That Spirit came: and then the wondrous change:
And I became a Poet.

ORVAL.

Veronica!

VERONICA.

Yes. Scorn me not. I am not what I was.
Wilt thou not praise me, Master? Ha! feel here,
How it beats in me, all this brave new world
That I am Queen of! how it shakes me . . feel . .
So yearning to be freed! One word of mine,
One little word can loose, or lock, it fast.
'Tis as I will. Shall I not show it thee?
Wilt thou not see how beautiful it is?
Couldst thou have made it fairer, lord? Say no!
Breathe not too hard. Such things are slight. Sometimes
A breath dissolves them, as a breath begets.
But be quite quiet, as it is good to be
When the long, loud, and heavy daylight leaves
Sore labour loosed, and the tired sense is soothed,
And ready to receive in thankful peace,
As best behoves, what comes:—first, a light wind,
So light, that all along a sleepy land
Laden with summer, it can make no sound
Where it winds softly, as a harmless snake,

Unhoused by some wise Indian's charming pipe,
Through little hamlets husht, and old warm woods
Solemn at sunset, till, to prove its power,
With laughter low it lifts the loose rose leaves
And lays them on the grass, where lovers sit
Lonely as thou and I; and then, a star
Silent and sudden, stol'n there, who knows how?
In heaven just where the waning amber flame
Of the faint west burns to a clear cold green.
So softly, and so silently, my world
Out of my heart grows, as a summer night
Grows out of heaven. Only be very still,
Only lean back with half-shut eyes, and lips
Half-open, acquiescent as they are
Whose hearts are happy; and thou too wilt feel
Its presence, as a summer night is felt
Rather than seen. Is it not fair enough
For thee to dwell in, also? Master, say,
Thou wilt not leave me all alone again
Those wretched days, and long unrestful nights?

ORVAL.

Never! nor night nor day. So help me Heaven!
Poor innocent fawn that by the heedless hand
That should have fed thee hast been stricken down!

VERONICA.

Nay, am I not thine equal? I know all.
Why should I fear thee? Sit upon the ground
Beside me, and look up, and listen. Thine eyes
Are bright; but not so starry bright as those
Of other creatures fair, and strong, and strange,

That nightly come—from far—to hear me sing,
Crouching at my cold feet: creatures born wild,
But tamed by songs that lure them from their lairs
Where mountain springs are loosed, or lower down,
Moss-mason'd haunts where hermit violets hide;
Or grottoes gray, under dim ancient gulfs
Of drowsy seas, where water gods grow old
And placid, propt on quiet coral beds
Blush-coloured by the sea-maids; or far, far
Beyond the sempiternal frosts, in caves
That glitter with witch fires to welcome home,
Ere the short northern night be spent, some wan
Sea-fairy, coming in her flying-coat
Of white swan-feathers. Others, with long hair
And lustrous serpent limbs, that love to lie
Low among yellow maize in a hot land,
Long sallow summer noons; and some that leave
Their wandering camps on thunder-paven clouds,
To listen . . . as thou listenest now. Nay, wait!

(*She sings.*)

What shall the Spirits that serve me bring to thee?
Wilt thou the light of the load-star, lord?
Or pluckt-out eyes of the Pleiads? My King, to thee
Pharaoh's chariot, and crown, and sword,
Shall they fetch from the deep? Or fling to thee,
Robbing Orion, his burning band?
They can dive, and soar, and run,
Serving me ever by sea and land:
Because my song is a mighty one.
What shall we bring to thee?
What shall we sing to thee?

Master, praise us, and prize our worth.
Listen! we cling to thee
Singing, and sing to thee
Songs of sorrow, and songs of mirth:
Songs of the winds and waves,
Plagues, famines, and earthquakes, and wars:
Ditties of death and of birth:
Litanies learn'd from the graves:
Lullabies sung by the stars
To the dead that sleep under the earth.

ORVAL.

Misery! misery!

VERONICA.

Embrace me, now!
My husband, I am happy at last.

VOICE FROM THE CELLS BELOW.

Behold,
The days of endurance are o'er!
With mine own right hand have I slain
Seven kings: and their crowns were of gold,
And their robes were red with the stain
Of a trampled people's gore.
And a hundred Priests, as they sung
High mass at the lighted altar,
I caught by the throat, and hung
Their heads in a hempen halter.
But there resteth a too-many-more.

VOICE FROM THE CELLS TO THE LEFT

Woe to ye! woe! for the sun

Is about to be snuft out:
And the spent stars, one by one,
Shall sink, and leave never a spark:
And the world shall wander about
In the dark, like a day that is done,
And lose its way in the dark.

ORVAL.

As mine is lost already! Fitly sings
The voice of some mad miserable wretch
The unconscious dirge of all that's dying here
In my life's utter failure!

VERONICA.

Sigh no more.
Why wilt thou sadden me? Thine eyes are wet:
Thy cheek is wan. Canst *thou*, too, grieve? Smile,
Orval!
I know a secret that shall comfort thee.
Thy son will be a Poet.

ORVAL.

What meanest thou?

VERONICA.

The Priest, with holy water at the font,
Baptized him Muriel. But I, with tears
Pour'd from the wells of a most perfect woe,
Baptized him POET.

ORVAL.

God, my punishment
Is just. But it is more than I can bear.

VERONICA.

Art thou not satisfied, great Master?

VOICE FROM THE CELLS ABOVE.

Father,
Forgive them, for they know not what they do.

VERONICA.

Hush! Didst thou hear him? Was there ever a man
So mad as that?

ORVAL.

Merciful Heavens!

VERONICA.

In truth
That man is mad. He knows not what he says.
But stoop! . . . Lean down thine ear . . . close . . .
closer . . . so,
For 'tis a fearful thing.
Now, I must tell thee
How it will be, if ever God goes mad.
There's not a worm that crawls about this earth
But suddenly 'twill cry out '*I am God*'!
Mark this . . . and, soon as it hath cried out thus,
Proclaiming its divinity, 'twill die
Dismally, rot, and putrify, and breed
From the foul dust of its dead wretchedness
Wretcheder reptiles still. The sun and moon,
And all the stars of heaven, that stand so fast,
Will stagger, feeling God's hand loosed, and fall
Upon each other, and all together, dasht

Into eternal darkness, disappear.
Then Jesus Christ, that loves us, will no more
Have power to save us: God Himself, in whom
He trusted, as we trusted Him, being lost.
In both hands will He lift up His great Cross,
And, as a woodman to the water drags
Wearily a fell'd tree, and casts it in,
And lets the torrent take and whirl it away
From where it grew, i' the old time, when birds
Came in from heaven to house among its leaves,
Safe from the dark,—and, safe from noontide heats,
The little children slept beneath its boughs,
From age to age,—so shall He cast that Cross
Into the torrent of departing time:
And there shall it be shatter'd, and men's lives
All litter'd with sad ruins of what it was.
Tell no man this.

ORVAL.

Return, Veronica,
Wilt thou not see thy child?

VERONICA.

He is not there.
He hath flown away. I know it. God gave him wings.
He is gone to wander the wide universe,
The winds know where: but they will never tell,
For no man understands what the winds say.
He hath far to go. And when he comes again
He will have gazed on all things that God made
Glorious, and terrible, and beautiful;

And tokens of them shall he bring with him,
Lest men should doubt him. When he comes again,
Then wilt thou love him, Orval, for the sake
Of his bright spoils.

ORVAL.

Woman! . . . My heart is broken.
Ah, God! that change? . . .
Veronica! . . . Thou ailest?

VERONICA.

Yes. They have hung up somewhere in my head
A burning lamp. And ever that lamp swings
Backwards and forwards. And it hurts me, lord.

ORVAL.

Veronica! for Heaven's sweet sake . . .

VERONICA.

Woe! woe!
To MURIEL THE POET! For his days
Are number'd. Woe to Muriel! woe! woe!
The Dark Ones have him.

ORVAL.

Holloa! Help! help! help!

DOCTOR'S WIFE (*entering with other women, and in great agitation*).

A blister! . . . Quick! . . . Fetch mustard to the feet!
Run to the Apothecary! Bustle, wench!
A blister! . . . I must look to the lady here.
Ah, sir, 'tis you have been the cause of this.

O dear! O dear! What *will* my husband say?
How could I help it, if he forced me out?
Quick, you there, to the storeroom!

VERONICA.

Fare thee well,
My husband!

DOCTOR'S WIFE.

Lord ha' mercy, what is this?
Are you the lady's husband after all?
I'm sure I beg your worship's pardon. Wench,
Dip me that spunge in vinegar. Make haste!
Well, this is wonderful!

ORVAL.

Love, do not die.
Pity me. Pardon me. Not die! not die!
If you but knew what ages of remorse
This moment's wretchedness contains! how lost,
How utterly, miserably lost I am,
If I lose you, love! I have sinn'd! I have sinn'd!
I dare not die. There must be years of pain
Ere I can hope to win a grave near thine.

VERONICA.

Belovèd, I do well. I know at last
Thou lovest me. And I am dying. Thank God!

ORVAL.

Alas, that swollen throat, and reddening brow . . .
. . . Pity, dread Power! lift up Thy heavy hand!

DOCTOR'S WIFE.

Sir, she will burst a blood-vessel. Pray, sir,
Help me to cut this corset. She must choke.
A knife! a knife, wench! Anything that's near!
What will my husband say to this?

ORVAL.

No, no!
This spasm must pass. There . . I have cut it . . see!
Her breast is bare. . . She breathes. Veronica!
She hears me not. For God's sake, Madam, speak!
Such things must happen often in such a place—
And you are used to them—you are not afraid
That she will die?—Look at her—Tell me—surely
Nothing's to fear?

THE DOCTOR (*who has entered unobserved while Orval was speaking*).

No, sir. Nor yet to hope.
Sir, you may drop that dagger. There's no breath
Left in that bosom. Upon those lips no pain
Where the last life-blood trickles. She sleeps well.
Nothing will wake her now. Cover the corpse.

END OF THE SECOND EPOCH.

THIRD EPOCH.

FATHER AND SON.

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THIRD EPOCH.

SCENE I.—*Sunset. Interior of a Gothic Chapel. Monuments, arms, banners, &c. Through an open door and porch in the background are seen a garden and graveyard (as in preceding scenes). The rays of the setting sun, passing through a stained window, between the tombs, fall in prismatic colours on the face and figure of the child, Muriel, who is kneeling. Orval is standing beside his son.*

ORVAL.

PRAY, Muriel, pray, my son, for the repose
Of thy dead mother's soul.

MURIEL.

Mater Regina!
Ave Veronica! pro nobis ora!
Queen of the flowers and stars!

ORVAL.

That is no part,
Boy, of thy prayer. Thou hast changed the words of it.
Think, child, again. Pray for thy mother's soul.
This is the day, and this the hour, she died,
Ten years ago. Pray for her soul's peace.

MURIEL.

Hail
Veronica! Mater Regina, hail!

Thou movest among the holy angels of God,
As the moon moveth through the stars of heaven:
And from their folded wings the angels pluck
Pure purple plumes, and strew them at thy feet:
And over these thou walkest, clad in mild
And melancholy splendour, as the moon
Walks o'er the purple wavelets of the sea.

ORVAL.

Boy, boy! what is this talk?

MURIEL.

The words pierce through me,
And pass from out of me. I cannot help it.

ORVAL.

Rise, son. God listens not to prayers like thine.
Alas! thy mother thou hast never known.
How, therefore, should'st thou love her?

MURIEL.

Deeply, Father.
I see my Mother often.

ORVAL (*starting*).

Where?

MURIEL.

In dreams.
Dreams? Everywhere I see her. Yesterday,
For instance, when . . .

ORVAL.

When . . . Boy, what say'st thou?

MURIEL.

Father,
How pale she is! but oh how beautiful!

ORVAL (*troubled*).

Doth she speak ever?

MURIEL.

Ay, last night . . .

ORVAL.

Last night?

MURIEL.

Methought I saw her down the darkness floating,
Vested in white, wan as a star-beam veil'd
In wandering mist. And ever as she flew
This song she sang, which in my soul still sounds.

ORVAL.

What sang she?

MURIEL.

I can sing it. But the tune,
The music, and the magic of it all,
Are gone! gone . . . gone!

ORVAL.

The words, Muriel? the words?

MURIEL (*sings*).

From off the immemorial palms
Whose murmur thrills, from dawn to even,
The golden Paradisal calms
With music only heard in Heaven,

I strip the balmy branches down,
To build a place of dreams and shadows,
Where thou may'st sleep, more soft and deep,
Than dews in leaves and grasses, grown
To seed, in windless meadows.

I glide among the glorious throngs
Of choral seraphs, weaning
Away, for thee, from out their songs
The music's midmost meaning.
From wells of wonder, depths of dream,
For thee, my child, I gather
Sweet sounds, and sights, and dim delights;
That thou may'st speak with power, and seem
A prophet to thy father.

There, Father! There's no word I have forgotten.
Only the tune was something otherwise.
But all day long I hear so many, and then
The echoes of them grow confused. For all
Passes, so swift! so swift!

ORVAL.

Veronica,
Merciless Pythoness, whose spirit, fed fierce
From troubled Memory's sad prophetic springs,
Still shrieks for sacrifice! Wilt thou destroy
Even thine own child? Is not my cup of doom
Fill'd to the bitter brim? Must my son pay
Thy vengeance for his father's crime? and I
Dig out my heart to hold another grave?
Is thy revenge, wrong'd one, not sated yet?

Revenge? What am I raving? Is not she
At rest, in Heaven? These are the common cheats
Of childhood's easily self-deceiving brain,
Whose uncorrected custom is to clothe
With mimic imagery our own crude troops
Of bodily feelings, till they front the eye
Garb'd in a borrow'd life, and seem to be
The individual external shapes
Of things not shaped within us.

MURIEL.

Now again,
Father, I hear my mother's voice. Her form
I see not.

ORVAL.

Where, child, dost thou hear the voice?

MURIEL.

Yonder, among the graves and cypresses,
Where the sun's light is fading fast.

ORVAL.

The voice
What is it saying?

MURIEL.

Singing, Father. Listen!
(*Sings.*)
Gifts I bring to thee, many in one,
Spirit of Muriel, soul of my son!

Gifts from the Powers that dwell on the height:
Gifts from the Powers that dwell in the deep:
Magic of music and marvellous light,
Magic of marvellous dream and sleep!
Much shall be taken: but much is given:
When the shade is on earth, and the star is in heaven.
From the depths of the love of a mother
In thy soul have I pour'd, I am pouring,
Such a light as shall last when all other
Is perisht, and earth is deploring
That her darkest night, ere his day be done,
Should dwell in the eyes of her brightest son.
And the name of the gifts that I give thee
Is BEAUTY: that never is past.
For if Beauty but love and not leave thee,
Thy father shall love thee at last.
And thine eyes shall be shut: but thy spirit shall see:
And I pass: but I pass not away from thee.

Ah me! I lose the rest.

ORVAL (*musingly*).

Is it possible
That the last word upon a dying lip,
The last thought of a parting soul, should be
The thought and word of all eternity?
O horrible! . . . if, after all, among
The blessed souls in Heaven (for, surely, she
Is with them) there be spirits who are . . . . mad!

MURIEL.

My mother's voice grows faint. I lose it, Father,

There, in the light that's going from the graves.

ORVAL.

Dreadful Corrector of man's pride! hast thou
Predestined, then, the child of my last hopes
To a life of madness,—an untimely grave?
Mercy! O from Thy feeble creature, doom'd
To breast a bruising world, take not away
Thy guiding gift of Reason! Architect
Of this inimitable monument
(Not built by hands, nor reparable here)
To the most sorrowful memory of a soul
That sleeps, I trust, in sempiternal peace,
Shatter not what Thyself hast made so fair!
Behold how desolate am I! who gaze
Around my life as, round a wasted land,
A watchman gazes, from a ruin'd tower:
An eminence above a solitude!
Pity my child, and pluck him from the clutch
Of those infernal persecutors all
That persecute me still. To me Thou hast given
Strength to support the burthen and the strain
Of fierce intolerable thought. But him?
A single thought, intense as those that burn
Nightly and daily here, might scorch and snap
The slender thread of his most delicate life.
God! God! For ten long weary wastes of years,
Neither by day, nor yet by night, have I
Known rest. And men have envied me my lot!
And in the clumsy catalogue, this blind
Ill-judging world compiles for ignorant Fame,
I have been number'd with the fortunate!

There is no human heart that knows what pains,
What torments from within and from without,
What fearful memories, what foreboded ills,
Thou hast imposed on mine. God, Thou hast spared
My reason, but to stone hast stricken my heart.
For I have gazed in the Gorgonian eyes
Of that most Beauteous Horror: and henceforth
The heart is ice, the imagination fire.
Father of Love, grant me to love my child!
Creator, spare thy creature!
Rise, boy. Sign
The cross, and come. Peace to thy mother's soul!

SCENE II.—*A public promenade. Persons of all classes passing. Orval in conversation with a Philosopher.*

PHILOSOPHER.

Trust me, my lord! I never am deceived.
When I speak positively I have grounds
For what I say. And I repeat,—the time
Approaches, when we shall emancipate
Women and negroes.

ORVAL.

Ah, . . . you think . . .

PHILOSOPHER.

I *know* it.
The countenance of Humanity is about
To assume new features. All that we behold
Implies amelioration, the approach
Of a more perfect social epoch. Yes,
Society must regenerate itself
By the elimination of decrepit forms.

ORVAL.

You think so?

PHILOSOPHER.

Surely, even as this old globe
We all inhabit, in its progress round
The central light . . .

ORVAL.

See you that rotten tree
Yonder?

PHILOSOPHER.

Where?

ORVAL.

There.

PHILOSOPHER.

What? with the green leaves budding
Upon the wither'd bark?

ORVAL.

The same. How many
Years longer, should you say, that tree can stand?

PHILOSOPHER.

How can I tell? One . . . two, perhaps.

ORVAL.

And yet
Although the roots be rotten, the trunk touchwood,
Fit only for the fire,—young leaves are budding
Upon the wither'd branch. Do you mark it?

PHILOSOPHER.

Well,
What does that signify?

ORVAL.

Nay, sir, I know not.
Save that the tree must fall, and be reduced
To powder, which the winds of heaven will soon
Sweep from the surface of the earth.

PHILOSOPHER.

What then?
My lord, you are wandering from the subject-matter.

ORVAL.

I? on the contrary. I was but seeking
An image of this age: an illustration
Of you, sir, and your theories.

PHILOSOPHER.

Well, I say . . .

(*They pass.*)

SCENE III.—*A lonely place among the mountains.*

ORVAL (*in reflection*).

To ashes I have burn'd the wealth of time
Upon the greedy altar of full-cramm'd
Unsatisfied Experience: that grim god
That hath a hundred hands to snatch and seize,
And in them all nothing to give. All kinds
Of knowledge and of passion I have cast

Into the ever hungering fire of one
Intense necessity to *feel*. All doubts
I have interrogated, all desires dislodged
From sullen slumber in their savage lairs,
And hunted hotly to the death; all hearts
I have ransack'd: and in mine own I find
Only the grave's great nothingness. My will
Can wake in others every sentiment,
Every emotion; but within myself
(Whose soul dwells dark in vast vacuity)
There is not either hope, or fear, or faith,
Or love. I walk through life, as through a desert
Once throng'd with cities, temples, palaces,
Places of sin and pleasure for proud kings,
Whose pride God punisht, pulling down their towers,
Making their places empty, and their land
A nameless solitude. I seem to see
(Since nothing breaks the boundless prospect bare
All round my barren path) . . . to see far off,
Beforehand, and so, unsurprised, encounter
The coming of all possible events.
I have no fear, and no desire have I,
That's not already old, and quite worn out.
I know that blindness on my son must fall.
I know the irreparably rotten frame
And structure of this old society
Wherein I live, whereof I am a part,
Must fall to pieces. All these things I know,
And, knowing them, suffer—even as God rejoices—
In myself only, for myself alone!

GUARDIAN ANGEL (*passing in the air above*).

Love thy neighbour! love thy neighbour
As thou lovest thyself! For others,
Not thine own self only, labour,
Live, and suffer. Help thy brothers:
Heal the hurt: and bind the broken.
So shall pain to thee be token
Of the pardoning power of what
Pain, for others borne, makes ever
Most divine in man's endeavour
To reach God.

ORVAL.

What voice was that?
Unhappy child! Doom'd, for a father's fault
By a mad mother's wrongs, to darken'd days.—
An endless incompleteness! a half-life
Made up of glorious failures! a flaw'd star
Fill'd with a beauteous sadness of eclipse!
Faint shadow of a fleeting angel, forced
To follow through a rough and thorny world
Feebly, the far, far off celestial flight
Of that wing'd glory, whose bright parentage
Its substanceless and scatter'd radiance owns
Vainly,—earth's weary traveller still, and still
Heaven's fugitive outcast! Most unhappy child!
Most miserable father!
No escape
From the revengeful furies! no surcease
Of everlasting punishment! no rest
Anywhere found!

What is yon mighty eagle
That rises yonder from the black ravine
Above the monumental mountains, bright
With sudden sunlight on his splendid wings,
Like Glory from a tomb?

THE EAGLE.

Hail, Orval! Hail!

ORVAL.

He spreads his flight toward me. And the loud
Harsh-sounding beat of his enormous vans
Is like the hiss and rush of iron shot
Heard through the smoke of battle.

THE EAGLE.

With the sword
Of thy forefathers, Orval, shalt thou all
Their ancient glory and power reconquer. Hail!

ORVAL.

His circling flight a windy whirlpool makes
And wavering darkness on the dismal air
Above my head. Round and around he wheels
On iron wing. My dizzy brain, too, whirls
Round and around. Fast, faster! on the wind
My hair is danced . . . my pulse beats . . . faster!
faster!
His keen eye glitters on me, hard and cold,
As the sharp shining of an unsheathed glaive.
It pierces through my brow, and through my brain,
It pierces . . . Ha! at last . . . I comprehend!

THE EAGLE.

Be bold and cruel. Nothing fear,
Nothing yield. To none give way.
Crimson'd all be thy career
With the blood of trampled prey.
Strong of will, and hard of hand,
Vanquish foes, and friends command:
O'er men's lives thy purpose spread:
Paven be thy path with power,
Piece of perishable clay!
Soon man's longest day is sped:
Soon the living are the dead:
Make immortal life's brief hour,
Be a god: create, destroy,
Subject all things to thy sway!
Life is power, and power is joy,
Though it be but for a day.
(*The Eagle disappears into a cloud*).

ORVAL.

I thank thee well, bird of the boundless air,
Lord of the summits, rider of the storm!
Hail to thee from these heaven-insulting hills
Whose bare and blasted pinnacles have been
Sole witnesses of our wild colloquy!
Whate'er thou art—true messenger, or false—
Prophet or tempter—boding harbinger
Of evil, or high augury of good,
Hail to thee, Glory's solitary herald!
And, O thou mighty Genius of the Past,
Hear my heart's invocation! If from earth

Thou beest, with the departed ages, gone
Into the bosom of invisible God,
Yet come thou back! come to my call! return,
Inspire my soul with thy strong solemn breath,
Prompt my heart, guide my dedicated hand,
And fashion into formidable deeds
The fiery thoughts that in me rise!

(*Setting his foot on a worm.*)

Die, reptile!
Nature thy lost life lacks not. The eyed air
Sees not—earth hears not—and the winds of heaven
Take hence no record of the fugitive pang
Of thy minute extinction. In the abyss
Of imminent confused calamity
Which I behold, beginning, at my feet,
To gape for men, thousands—like thee—shall perish,
Leaving behind them neither name, nor fame,
Nor glory, nor regret. Not one of those
Reckless innumerable clouds, that roll
Through heaven's remorseless emptiness, will pause
To weep celestial drops of pity down
On hosts of earth's unnoticeable sons
Whom time is to oblivion hastening now.
And I myself? . . Before me dim, and drear,
And lurid,—hewn through the time-harden'd mass
Of mortal misery,—I begin to see,
As by the light of battle-fires, my own
Predestined pathway to a bloody grave.

O thou blue heaven, that girdlest in cold peace
This groaning earth! Behold, her weary womb

Travails, tormented with the endless birth
Of endless woes: yet is thine infinite calm
Untroubled by her infinite agony!
O Nature! pitiless mother! I go forth
Upon a perilous journey. But at length
I am about to live the life of man—
The *natural* life, of man! For I go forth
To fight my brothers. Sound thy trumpet, Time,
And bid me to the battle. My spirit is arm'd.

SCENE IV.—*After dark. A Hovel on a heath. At the door of the Hovel.*

A VOICE OUTSIDE.

What lives when it is buried?

A VOICE INSIDE.

Liberty.

What wakes when it is slumbering?

VOICE OUTSIDE.

Revenge.

VOICE INSIDE.

When the dogs bark, what doth the fox do?

VOICE OUTSIDE.

Burrow.

VOICE INSIDE.

When the fox burrows, what do the geese?

VOICE OUTSIDE.

Cackle.

VOICE INSIDE.

When the geese cackle, what do the cubs cry?

VOICE OUTSIDE.

Panurge!

VOICE INSIDE.

Enter Lucius Junius Brutus!

(*The Modern Brutus enters the Hovel.*)

SCENE V.—*Noon. An apartment in the Castle. Orval, Muriel, and a Physician.*

ORVAL.

All science hitherto has fail'd. In you
Is my last hope.

PHYSICIAN.

Your lordship's confidence
Honours me much.

ORVAL.

Speak to him, Muriel.
Explain to him thy sensations, child.

MURIEL.

I neither
Can recognize you, Father, nor this gentleman.
Sparks of bright fire entangled in black webs

Before my eyes seem to be passing ever.
Sometimes it seems a crawling of black snakes
With glittering spots that sparkle as they glide
Into a twisted globe of dusky coils;
Sometimes a golden cloud: then the cloud opens,
Breaks into sparks, stains, and soft colours, and all
Once more is darkness. But I feel no pain.

PHYSICIAN.

Come hither, little lord. What is his age?

ORVAL.

Twixt ten years and eleven.

DOCTOR.

Turn this way,
To the window . . so, my boy.

ORVAL.

Well, Doctor?

PHYSICIAN.

Well,
The eyelids are quite healthy. All the white
O' the eye is clear. The veins are not surcharged.
The nerves are sound, too. Have no fear, young sir.
We soon shall cure you. (*To Orval*): Not a hope, my lord!
The pupil is insensible to light.
Complete paralysis of the optic nerve!

MURIEL.

All's dark around me. Utterly dark.

ORVAL.

Alas!
Those sightless orbs are staring at the sun.

MURIEL.

I can see better when I close my eyes.

PHYSICIAN.

The mind has wasted, here, the body's force.
You must beware of catalepsy.

ORVAL.

Anything
You please . . . the half o' my fortune . . . all of it . . .
If you but cure my son!

PHYSICIAN.

Science, my lord,
Has no capacity to compensate
Nature's defeat. We can do nothing here.
My duty to your lordship. I've a case
Of cataract in the neighbourhood . . .

ORVAL.

Stay, sir,
For mercy's sake . . . as you are a Christian man . .
Leave us not thus! Wait! wait! examine further.

PHYSICIAN.

Perhaps it might be interesting to you
To know the name of this disease . . .

ORVAL.

No hope, then?
Indeed no hope? Indeed?

PHYSICIAN.

'Tis *amaurosis.* (*Exit.*)

ORVAL (*embracing his son*).

But thou see'st yet, my child—my hope—my all!
A little yet? Muriel, a little?

MURIEL.

I can
Hear thy voice only, Father.

ORVAL.

Muriel,
Turn to the window. Look! the day is clear,
The sun shines bright.

MURIEL.

I see, as though it were,
A multitude of changing shapes that swim
Fast, fast, between the eyelid and the eye.
I seem to recognize amongst them things
I knew once—places I have seen—and scraps
Of books that I have read.

ORVAL.

Then thou seest yet?
Muriel, thou seest yet? the blind see not, boy.
But thou seest . .

MURIEL.

With my mind's eyes, Father, yes.

ORVAL (*kneeling*).

Great Spirit, that dwellest in eternal light,
Illumine those dark eyes . . . .
(*Starting up.*)
Tush! 'tis in vain.
Whom do I kneel to? For no prayers of mine
Are pathways to God's presence.

A VOICE BEHIND.

Thankless one,
Thy son is now a poet. Be satisfied.

SCENE VI.—*Night. At the sign of the Dragon. A sort of loft, accessible only from below by a ladder which is indistinctly seen through a dark aperture. In one part of the floor an iron ring is fastened, forming the handle to a trap-door. The loft is dimly lighted.*

THE MODERN BRUTUS (*alone*).

What, if Panurge were betraying us?
It wrongs my faith to fear it. But why all
These compromises, these delays, these pardons?
Or wherefore should he spare this man—the worst,
The proudest, and most powerful, of our foes?
He cannot fear him, cannot pity him,
And cannot need him. Why then these misgivings?
For, Orval gone, the head goes, and therewith
Must fall the body at once.

Well, I have leave
To test this brother's truth: who should be here
Already, I think. He seems trustworthy, stout
Of heart and will. Why did Panurge seem
To be so sure the man would disobey
The order I must give him?
If he shrink . . . .

(*Lifts up the trap-door—looks down, and closes it again with a sigh.*)

All is prepared.
O shame! O worst of all,
Mother, that we should ever be compell'd
By the strict justice of thine injured cause
To sacrifice to thee one of thy sons,
One of our brothers! But be witness thou,
Dread and dear Goddess, whom I breathe to serve
And live to die for, that in all this world
There's nothing I love more than I love thee;
Nothing that from the deep and bitter cry
Of thy great outraged heart mine own withholds,
Nothing in me that is not thine! O Mother,
Is not thy cry for ever in mine ears,
Thy wrongs for ever present to mine eyes,
Thy patient centuries of suffering,
Thy pains, and shames, and injuries, all mine,
And thy predestined, though so long-delay'd,
Dominion the sole business of my thoughts?
My heart is virgin, and my soul sincere.
Be witness, Mother, if it be my doom
To smite a brother, 'tis not that thy son
I love not, Mother, but that I love thee

More than he loved thee, the degenerate one!

(*A distant clock strikes.*)

The hour!

(*Looking down the ladder.*)

He comes.

(*A youth, meanly clad, enters by the ladder, which the Modern Brutus draws up, closing the aperture.*)

Thou art exact.

THE YOUTH.

And thou.

MODERN BRUTUS.

Welcome, my brother!

THE YOUTH.

Thou hast seen the Chief?

MODERN BRUTUS.

I have.

THE YOUTH.

And hast received the orders?

MODERN BRUTUS.

Yes.

THE YOUTH.

The man's name, Brother?

(*Modern Brutus whispers him*).

Orval? all I fear'd!

MODERN BRUTUS.

Thou shrinkest? Great the peril, if thou fail.
But men that are in earnest never fail.
Great is the peril, yes. Greater the cause,

Greater the glory . . . great if thou succeed,
Great if thou perish.

THE YOUTH.

Orval? why that man?
Brother, must that man die?

MODERN BRUTUS.

Brother, he *must*.
Thou knowest the forfeit?

THE YOUTH.

Ay. If that were all . . .

MODERN BRUTUS.

It is not all. By thee or by another
He dies. Thy death can save him not. And yet
Thou diest if he but live beyond the hour
Thine oath, to him, made final.

THE YOUTH.

Brother, listen!
This Orval is not as the others are:
Hopelessly unimprovable by time.
Hath he not pleaded for the People's Cause
Often?

MODERN BRUTUS.

For pastime, yes. When he was young.

THE YOUTH.

And who more loudly hath denounced than he
The wrongs we all have suffered from his class?

MODERN BRUTUS.

When? when there seem'd no chance of their redress.
To whom? to those whose ears, he knew, were deaf.
Then it was safe. Friend, when mankind began
To dwell in cities, each behind him left,
In the wilds, his individuality.
In this, our modern epoch, every man,
High, low, or rich, or poor, is but a cork
Dropt by the purblind accident of birth
On one or other of the mighty waves
Of that most stormy sea—Society.
He seems to move, but moves not: he is moved
By the elemental current. As the cork
Is by the wave it floats on, so the man
Is, by the class that he belongs to, borne
Where wind and tide, and not his own will, urge him.
The man's capacity of choice, whate'er
It pleases him to call it,—judgment, will,
Or conscience—is, unconsciously to him,
Conditioned by the circumstance of what
Supports and bears him. When the skies are clear,
And seas are calm, each cork that floats at ease,
Loose in its lazy element, hath leave
Of wind and wave to look this way and that,
And please itself with profitless selection
Of one or other prospect out of reach.
But when the storm comes, all are whirled, and driven
Whichever way the waves, that bear them, beat.

THE YOUTH.

Not Orval. Ever from the titled tribe

Of most ignoble men with noble names
This man stood separate: and to them belongs
No more than to the lowland the lone alp
That from the lowland soars. Companionless
He in his solitary conscience . . .

MODERN BRUTUS.

Tut!
In the long run, the conscience of a man
Rests in the bosom of his class. The point
Of individual honour is for each
Fixt by the general interest of the whole.
And if I say "the whole" I mean, of course,
Merely the whole of those whose interests hang
Together in one balance. The whole tribe
Of bears, wolves, lions, tigers, have, no doubt,
Interests in common to themselves, which we,
The tribes of men, find much opposed to ours.
But, being a man, when I say "Liberty"
I mean not liberty for tigers, wolves,
Lions, and bears, but liberty for men;
Which may mean death to lions, and their like.

THE YOUTH.

Hast thou a mother?

MODERN BRUTUS.

No.

THE YOUTH.

But once thou hadst?

MODERN BRUTUS.

None but THE REVOLUTION. Motherless
And fatherless, and nameless have I lived,
Until I lived for what is now to me
Father and mother both . . OUR CAUSE.

THE YOUTH.

Alas!
For then thou canst not understand.

MODERN BRUTUS.

Why not?

THE YOUTH.

Brother, that man once saved my mother's life.

MODERN BRUTUS.

Which, Son of Freedom, that man's life now kills.

THE YOUTH.

My father was—a vagrant and a thief
(For rich men have made poverty a crime).
He lived between the high road and the jail—
Lived? starved—I scarce know how: died—on the gallows.
We tramp'd, and tramp'd—my mother and myself,
A mere brat then—barefoot from barn to barn
To the great town—to beg my father's life
Back from the hangman's hand—and reach'd the town
At dawn—in time to join the gaping crowd
Beneath the scaffold where they strangled him.
My mother's shrieks disturb'd the ceremony
Which they call'd Justice Vindicated—marr'd

The Majesty of Law—that was their phrase—
They hailed her to the jail, and from the jail
They hailed her to the Justice. When a man
Insults some noble lady, what does she?
I know not. But I know that every word
That man said was an outrage, and a wrong,
An infamous wrong to womanhood: and I know,
While he was speaking, that my mother spat
In that man's face. Spit in the face of Justice?
A vagrant, and a tramp, a felon's wife?
Off with her to the whipping-post! Just then,
As they were dragging her away—I think
I hear her shrieks yet—see those eyes, and see
The stare change in them from intensest terror
To indignation, as there came a sneer
Curling the courtly and contemptuous lip
Of some young noble who had lounged in there
Whilst strolling homeward from a night's debauch.
—I think that sneer was not for my poor dam,
But her tormentors. But she knew not that.
The brute that held her had a knife in his belt.
She pluckt it out, sprang loose, and stabb'd the youth.
The wound was skin-deep, but the skin was noble.
The crime was patent, and the sentence death,
Death by the wheel. O that last night of all
Pass'd with my wretched mother, in the den
Of their condemn'd ones! O the agony
When that door open'd—as I deem'd, on death,
The death of all I ever loved—my mother!
But it was life. 'Twas the young noble's self
That came to save us. He had pleaded for her;

He brought her pardon . . . she was free! O Brother,
If you but knew what was the meaning *then*
Of that word . . . *Free!* Brother, that noble's name
Was Orval. Brother, Orval is the man
That spared my mother's life. I cannot kill him.

MODERN BRUTUS.

Alas! alas, my brother! O why, why
Fell not to me the glorious task? Call back
That hasty word, that breath that breaks an oath!
Brother, were men at peace,—man's great cause gain'd,
The sword of Freedom sheath'd, her banners furl'd,
Her troops disbanded, and her foes disperst,
We two might sit here, side by side, all night,
Praising this Orval for his one good deed:
And thou shouldst teach me thy dead mother's name,
That I might teach, for that name's sake, this rough
Coarse voice of mine, hoarse from harsh battle-cries,
To find out tenderer tones . . . Were there but time!
But there's no time—no peace. We are at war,
And war hath two sides only—Friend and Foe.
What separates foes from friends? A name: a flag:
A uniform: the colour of a coat:
Rude guides, but safe! No nice distinctions stop
War's brutal but inevitable path.
'Tis not a man, it is a cause, we fight,
Though with the cause we strike the man. War's fault,
And theirs that forced war on us, but not ours.
My friend, my brother in arms, O let the dead
Bury their dead! Woe be to him whose hand
Is on the plough if he turn back before

The field be furrow'd. I that never knelt
To any man, behold, I kneel to thee!
Brother, once more, wilt thou redeem thine oath?

THE YOUTH.

Brother, once more, I will not.

MODERN BRUTUS.

Be it so.
Mine own I must redeem, then.

THE YOUTH.

How?

MODERN BRUTUS.

Unheard,
Unseen. In silence, and in secresy.
Here, and at once. Ere long the time shall be,
When the scorn'd Justice of The Revolution,
Now forced to hide in holes and dens like this
Her sacred head, and trust unwitness'd hands
Like mine to do her bidding in the dark,
Shall strike her victim on the public place,
Crowds in the streets, crowds on the housetops, crowds
Everywhere round her, to applaud the blow!
Behold thy grave.

(*He opens the trap.*)

Mother of mighty times,
Goddess armipotent, whose strong right hand
Plucks down upon the heads of trembling kings
The mouldering masonries their slaves have built
Against the march of thy majestic hosts!
Fair harvester, whose foizon, now full-ear'd,

Is ripening fast, large-hearted Liberty,
Look down, and bless thy victim; and thy priest.
Brother, one last embrace . . . brother no more!
Not I have torn our bond of brotherhood.
Pardon me, as I needs must pardon thee,
Unhappy youth! Sad for thy sake am I
Who dare not spare thee, for the sake of Her
That claims, from me the blow, from thee the blood.
This is not murder: it is sacrifice.
Thou hast been judged.

PANURGE (*suddenly appearing through the open trap.*)
And art acquitted.

MODERN BRUTUS.
Thou!
How art thou here, Panurge?

PANURGE.
Lucius Junius,
Wherever the Cause needs me, there am I.
What matter how? Dost thou not know me yet?
Brutus, withhold thine hand. Rise up, young man.
I have heard all. And, for thy broken oath
This once, I pardon thee.

MODERN BRUTUS.
My Chief, our laws . . .

PANURGE.
Enjoin unquestioning obedience,
Brutus, to me. Not against human rights,
But human wrongs, my banner is unfurl'd.

This blood shall not be on it. States and thrones,
And dynasties, and churches, have been founded
On crimes: whereof I hold the worst of all
To be Ingratitude. Our empire, boy,
Needs no such vile assistance. Lucius Junius,
Open this door, and let that ladder down.

(*Brutus obeys in silence.*)

(*To the Youth, in a whisper*). Young man, I cannot save thee, nor thy friend,
Beyond to-night. Lord Orval's life is doom'd;
His death is certain . . . save for the sole chance,
The last, that's left to him . . . Let him know that . . .
Flight. Instant flight. Let him know that, young man,
If thou would'st save him. Hush! (*Aloud*). Brutus, thou hast
Served firmly, and served faithfully, the Cause.
Blessèd are they that hear and do. Embrace
Thy pardon'd Brother.

MODERN BRUTUS.

He hath yet to prove
He *is* my brother.

PANURGE.

And he shall. Away,
Young man! Thou hast thy brother's confidence
To win back,—mine to justify. Depart.
(*Whispering*). Make haste! Thou hast not half an hour to lose.

(*The Youth descends the ladder.*)

Did I not tell thee, Lucius Junius Brutus,
This man would fail us?

MODERN BRUTUS.

But why pardon him?
Why didst thou let him go?

PANURGE.

Because I knew
That he would go to carry out my will.

MODERN BRUTUS.

What! dost thou trust him yet?

PANURGE.

Implicitly.

MODERN BRUTUS.

To do what?

PANURGE.

To warn Orval.

MODERN BRUTUS.

To warn *him?*
Wilt thou let *him* escape?

PANURGE.

Unthinking boy!
How can he? If he fly, he is lost. I fear,
I fear he will not fly!

MODERN BRUTUS.

But if he do?

PANURGE.

Disgrace first, and death afterwards, for him.
His life? that's nothing. But his influence?

That's all. That's what we must annihilate.
Dost thou not see how easy it is to take
This man's life? but how difficult to take
Its influence from the lives of other men?
'Tis that which we must aim at. If he fly
(Be satisfied, I have him in my net
He cannot 'scape me)—if he fly—why then,
His influence flies with him, and is lost.
Then, body and soul, and name and fame, he is mine!
Boy, there are lives and lives, and deaths and deaths.
This man's life is impress'd in palpable forms
Upon the public mind; and this man's death
Must be impress'd upon it also thus.
'Tis not enough for me to have his life.
There's too much of it living in his name.
I must have both. I know that frighten'd hind,
Soon as he leaves this house, will haste to warn him.
My only fear is that he will not fly,
So will he 'scape me. I shall have to weave
New webs. But doubt not, I shall catch him yet.
His mind to mine for mastery? . . . We shall see!
Now leave me, Brutus. I must be alone.

MODERN BRUTUS (*going*).

What, if Panurge is betraying us?

SCENE VII.—*Night. A Chamber in the Castle. Lights, &c. Physician and Kinsmen.*

FIRST KINSMAN.

Undoubtedly. Most sad. But are you sure, sir?
Stone blind?

PHYSICIAN.

Unusual . . . extraordinary,
So young . . .

SECOND KINSMAN.

He always was a weakly child.
The mother died . . . you understand?

PHYSICIAN.

The mother?
How? . . . do you mean . . . ?

SECOND KINSMAN.

Precisely.

ORVAL. (*entering*).

Pardon me,
Gentlemen, for so long detaining you.
But 'tis not till past midnight that of late
The crisis comes. Then he begins to speak.
Follow me. This way, Doctor.

THIRD RELATION.

After you, sir.

PHYSICIAN.

I am all anxiety to contemplate
This deeply interesting phenomenon. (*Exeunt*).

SCENE VIII.—*A Bed-chamber, dimly lighted. Orval, Physician, Nurse, and Kinsmen as before. Muriel asleep.*

FIRST KINSMAN.

Hush! Listen!

SECOND KINSMAN.

Is he awake? His eyes are open.
And yet he seems to hear not.

PHYSICIAN.

Gentlemen,
Really, I must entreat your silence.

SECOND KINSMAN.

Strange!

MURIEL (*rising*).

Away! away!

SECOND KINSMAN.

Mark! the arms folded.

FISRT KINSMAN.

Ay,
Upon the breast. He seems to walk as one
That walks with difficulty through a crowd.

PHYSICIAN.

Gentlemen, I entreat . . .

NURSE.

Dear Lord!

MURIEL.

Avaunt
Creatures of Darkness! Am I not the son
Of Light and Song? Where are my singing robes?
Off, Hell-garb! Who hath clad me in it? Ye?
What will ye with me? Shall I yield to ye

The empire of my soul? Ye? I defy ye!
Never, abortive terrors, sullen shapes
Sent to torment me, never shall I be
The slave of him whose sceptre sent you forth!
Not though mine eyes be taken from me: mine
Mine eyes are still. I know where they are gone.
My mother bathes them in the light of Heaven:
They shall return to me, star-sighted, strong,
Sun-searching, splendid with sidereal fire.

FIRST KINSMAN.

Mad! Just like his poor mother.

PHYSICIAN.

As I suspected.

NURSE.

O Holy Virgin, give the lad these eyes
Of mine, or I shall weep them blind as his!

SECOND KINSMAN.

It is a melancholy satisfaction
Always, to be quite sure one can do nothing
To mitigate the affliction of one's friends.

NURSE.

Lord! Lord! that I should live to hear him talk
Like a proud Pagan, or wild man o' the woods,
Or any other common creature! I
That suckled the poor brat at mine own breast,
Ay, did I! and a finer babe was never
Put to the nipple. Many's the time I said it,

" Look if our little lord (the Saints preserve him!)
Come not to something great! " And, O Lord, Lord,
To come to this!

PHYSICIAN.

Be silent my good woman.
This is extremely interesting.

FIRST KINSMAN.

Hist!

MURIEL.

Mother!
Dear Mother of mine in Heaven, I prithee send
Down to me images of lovely things:
That I, with these, may make me, here i' the midst
Of this great darkness, Mother, a new world,
Like that which I have lost.

SECOND KINSMAN.

What think you, Coz?

PHYSICIAN.

Gentlemen, really . . .

FIRST KINSMAN.

Listen!

MURIEL.

Come with me.
Let us go hence . . . April hath gone before.
I know the way she went. And we shall find
Things dropt by her in the grass. Come down with me
Into the dimmest wildness of the wood,

Where only here and there the hidden sun
Brightens the clear translucent green, and paves
Our whisperous path with drops of fire, that trickle
Through tender webs of winking shade. The moss
Is ever fresh and buxom to the foot
Under these low-bent boughs. I know a place
Quiet and happy, quite shut in with leaves
And flowers; faint woodbine, and the bramble rose,
And freckled foxglove, cloven ivy, and loose
Convolvuluses, all the walls have woven
With fragrant broidery: and underneath
The pleasant grass is multitudinous all
With merry daisies thick as eveping stars,
And plots of tufted thyme, and primroses,
Pale priestesses, with countenances calm
In sanctuaries of rough dewy leaves,
And cowslips, and anemones, and violets,
And crocuses, like points of windless flames
Tenderly curved and stain'd. This place is safe.
An old tree holds it in one arm of his.
The winds are warn'd to vex us not.

ORVAL.

Alas!

SECOND RELATION.

His talk is wholly unintelligible.

PHYSICIAN.

Precisely as I had anticipated.

MURIEL.

Ah, they have spoil'd my palace! Bud and leaf

Shatter'd! Is no place safe from them? Ah me,
Again the ghastly darkness! Mother! Mother!

FIRST KINSMAN.

I never saw such anguish in a face.

MURIEL.

Mother, I hear thee not. I hear thee not!
Leave me not all alone in the great darkness.
Oh!

SECOND KINSMAN.

What a moan!

(*Muriel sinks back, exhausted, on the bed.*)

PHYSICIAN.

My lord, it is my duty
To state the truth to you without reserve.

SECOND KINSMAN.

Ay, hear him, Cousin. Speak out, Doctor. Tell us
Precisely what this means.

PHYSICIAN.

My lord, your son
Is victim to a mental malady,
Superinduced by a too exquisite sense,
Become habitual, as I greatly fear,
Of his sad physical calamity.
Extreme cerebral agitation thus,
Acting upon a bodily frame o'erwrought
Already by the habit of a life
Somewhat too studious for his childish years,
Induces the condition of what, thus

Developed, as we find it here, my lord,
Must be call'd normal trance.

ORVAL.

Inscrutable
Lawgiver! hear how glibly doth this pedant
Explain thy laws!

PHYSICIAN.

A pen and ink, if you please.
We must try soothing remedies. I fear
Tis no great use, though. *Laurei decoctio . . .*
Aqua. . .

ORVAL.

You will find all that you can want, sir,
In the next room. Go,—write out what you will.
Gentlemen, Cousins, I entreat your leave
To be alone.

KINSMEN.

Cousin, good night. Good night.
(*Exeunt with the Physician.*)

MURIEL (*waking*).

Good night? . . A long, long night! They should have said
A night without an end. Not good! not good!
Father, I am very tired.

ORVAL.

Lean on me, lad.
So . . Let me lift thee into bed.

MURIEL.

My sleep
To-night was broken by strange voices, Father.
Where are we? If I could, I would sleep again.
I am so tired.

ORVAL.

Sleep, my poor boy. Sleep sound.
Thy father's blessing be upon thy dreams.
My blessing? Ah, what can my blessing give him?
Not light, alas, nor health, nor joy, nor peace.
Sleep, Muriel. Sleep, unhappy child!
For me
The blood-red battle-dawn is breaking. Here
There is no time for tears, none for regret!
Soon, at the head of a half-barbarous
Handful of men, must I go forth, to cope
With the mad masses of mankind. And thou?
How shalt thou fare, poor boy?—sick, helpless, blind!
Child-poet, with no audience in a world
Of grown-up miseries! Poor perishing bud,
Blighted from birth, and canker'd in the green,
Last of a lofty, old, illustrious tree!
Sole, fragile, scion of a haughty House
Whose sires, of yore, in iron harness trod
Tremendous fields, and bearded brawling kings.
Farewell! O heart of mine, bear up, bear up
Against this load—Break not, thou stubborn heart!
Let all break on thee, till this breaking world
Be ended. Sleep, my son. He sleeps already.
And, sleeping smiles . . . ah, not on *me!* Once more,

Once more . . . one last sad kiss . . . and then . . .
farewell,
Thou most unfortunate of the angels stray'd
From Heaven!

ANDREW (*entering hastily*).

My lord, the man that brought this letter
Refused to wait: but left it, vehemently
Affirming it to be of urgent import,
Concerning nothing less than life or death
Or imminent danger to your lordship.

ORVAL.

Good.
Leave it. And leave me. (*Exit Servant.*)
I am weary of all things.
Life can bring nothing new . . . not even death.

(*Opens the letter, languidly, and reads*).

"*Thine hours are counted. Fly, Lord Orval, fly!*
There is no inch of all this land that's safe
For thee to stand on. The Sworn Brotherhood
Are sworn to have thy life. Their hands are lifted
Invisibly against thee, everywhere:
Their daggers are all round thee, day and night,
When the air seems most empty: and their eyes,
Unseen, are on thee. Linger not an hour.
One whom thou hast befriended; and that knows
More than he may reveal.
Burn this. And fly."
I fly? He little knows me that wrote this.
(*Burns the letter in the candle.*)

THE NURSE.

My lord, the Doctor asks your presence.

ORVAL.

I come.
Rest by the boy. And watch him well. He sleeps.
. . . . Rather to arms at once! to arms! Arise,
Arise, mine eagle! Havoc calls.. I come.

END OF THE THIRD EPOCH.

FOURTH EPOCH.

MAN AND MAN.

FOURTH EPOCH.

SCENE I.—*Night. Interior of a subterranean Cellar; filthy, and ill-lighted by a lanthorn swung from the vaulting. Along the walls pistols and cutlasses suspended. On the floor broken wine-flasks and empty barrels strewn about. In the midst, under the lanthorn, a rude table. Thereon a greasy volume open: pens, ink in a broken wine-glass, and a large earthen bowl smeared over the edges with blood. On a sort of altar, a skeleton gorgeously robed and crowned. Tapers burning before it. Between the altar and the table a small high platform, covered with crimson cloth, and canopied in black. On the platform is seated the President of the Secret Society of* THE AVENGERS. *Before him, at the foot of the platform, a Novice, kneeling, with hands bound, breast bare, and marks of blood upon it. The rest of the Brotherhood is grouped around the Novice.*

THE PRESIDENT.

AND to maintain inviolate secrecy.

THE NOVICE.

I swear. So help me God!

PRESIDENT.

Citizen Novice,
Thy tongue trips. Have a care. There is no God.
We have deposed him. He was in our way,
For, being a tyrant, he made common cause

With the other tyrants. Bring the symbol forth
Of brutish Superstition.

(*One of the brethren brings forward a crucifix.*)

Man, behold
The no-more-to-be-tolerated badge
Of thy past degradation. Spit on it.

NOVICE.

Citizen Atheist, I obey.

PRESIDENT.

Remove it.
He hath saved his throat.

THE BROTHER.

Back to thy tomb, defunct
Divinity!

THE PRESIDENT.

To spare not man, nor woman,
Against whose life the edict hath gone forth.

NOVICE.

I swear.

PRESIDENT.

To execute, without remorse,
Without reluctance, and without delay,
Whatever order shall be given to thee.

NOVICE.

I swear.

THE PRESIDENT.

Upon all persons, old or young,
Or high or low, or great or small, or here

Or elsewhere, nobles, prelates, princes, kings,
Or those that do adhere to the same.

NOVICE.

I swear.

PRESIDENT.

And to observe the aforesaid laws to the death.

NOVICE.

I swear.

PRESIDENT.

He hath pass'd the triple ordeal.
Enter his name upon the Books.

A BROTHER (*writing*).

Josiah
Cobble. Eyes grey, small. Hair red. Stature low.
Age four and twenty years. Former condition,
Maker of boots and shoes in the employ
Of the Enemies of Human Freedom. Sworn
A Brother of the Secret Philosophical
And Philanthropical Society
Of the AVENGERS: sitting in this city
On the First Day of the Second Month o' the Year
One, of the General Emancipation.
Enter'd.

PRESIDENT.

Unbind his hands. Give him the bowl.
Rise, Brother, and embrace thy brethren. Drink.

CHORUS OF THE UNITED BROTHERHOOD.

Press the grapes of the vintage of vengeance. Thine,

Young vintager, now is the vineyard gate.
And drink, Son of Freedom, the blood and the wine:
The wine of the wanton, the blood of the great!
Fallen thy bonds are. Behold, we have burst them.
Laugh! Not on nectar the old gods nurst
The growth of the young gods, who have disperst them:
And stronger than nectar, to quench our thirst,
Is the cup of the curses wherewith we have curst them
By whom we were curst.
Feed on the flesh of the princes of earth.
Let it fatten thee now, as our own fatten'd them.
There be plenty of bones, and of blood no dearth:
And these dishes are garnisht with gold and gem.
Sign'd are the lintels, and sharpen'd the daggers.
The powerless strikes, and the powerful staggers.
The halters are spun.
Judged are the judges: rod-beaten the lictors:
Tried the tribunals: and vanquisht the victors:
The heads are all reckon'd: the headsman is beckon'd:
Our work hath begun.
(*A knocking without.*)

PRESIDENT.

Back to your places, all of you! Remove
Those weapons. Each man to his work again.
Who knocks?

A VOICE OUTSIDE.

A friend, and Freedom's Son.

PRESIDENT.

His name?

THE VOICE.

Lucius Junius!

PRESIDENT.

'Tis the Modern Brutus!
Salute him, Brothers. Open in the name
Of Liberty. Hail to thee, Lucius Junius!
(*The Modern Brutus enters.*)

OMNES.

Brutus, thy brethren here, in thee, salute
The soul of Rome's best Roman.

BRUTUS.

Good, friends, good!
I see that you are sharpening your knives
Ready for use. Good, good! Be all prepared.
What art thou making, Brother Citizen?

ONE OF THE BRETHREN.

A hempen rope.

BRUTUS.

Good! He that 'scapes the steel
Must hang by the cord. And thou?

ANOTHER.

I stole this knife
Out of the kitchen of an old Archbishop.
And it has sliced him many an ortolan.
I am giving it a new handle, and an edge.

BRUTUS.

Good, good! Some throats are easier cut than capons.
And thou?

A THIRD.

This is the fowling-piece with which
The keeper of my lord shot my boy, Jack,
For having stolen a hare. The man had this
When, last night, I shot *him*. I took it from him.
It is a keepsake. I am giving it
A new lock.

BRUTUS.

Good, good! There be other vermin
Than hares that now need thinning. Keep the gun.

PRESIDENT.

But tell us, Brother Citizen, is the day
Fixt yet?

BRUTUS.

Oh patience, Citizen President!
I want a man of you. Which is the idlest?
Or which the boldest?

PRESIDENT.

There's a novice here
That hath not yet been tried: Wilt thou have him?
He took the oath but even now.

BRUTUS.

Good, good!
Follow me, Brother Novice.

NOVICE.

I obey.

SCENE II.—*Noon. The Revolutionary Camp. Within the Tent of Panurge. Citizens armed, standing sentry. Shouting without.*

PANURGE (*entering the tent*).

How many hundred brainless brutes have howl'd
Hurrah to every word that from my lips
Hath fallen just now! What one of all them
Divined my simplest meaning, comprehended
The plainest of my purposes, or caught
The faintest glimmer of the goal to which
My will is leading them? *O fervide*
Imitatorum pecus!

(*The Modern Brutus enters with the Novice.*)

Is it the man?

BRUTUS.

Ay.

PANURGE.

Dost thou know Lord Orval?

NOVICE.

Know him? Yes,
By sight, great Citizen. He once spoke to me.

PANURGE.

In truth? what said he?

NOVICE.

At the Church door once,
Meaning no harm, I brusht him as I pass'd.
He turn'd, and kick'd me, adding, with an oath,

"Out of my way, hound!" I have made a rope
To hang him with. 'Tis ever in my pocket.

PANURGE.

To-morrow thou wilt go to him, at daybreak:
And say to him that I intend to see him;
That I will visit him at midnight, tell him,
Alone—in private—without witnesses.

NOVICE.

Citizen General, how many men
Do you propose to give me?

PANURGE.

Not a man.

NOVICE.

There will be danger. With no escort . . .

PANURGE.

Man,
Thine escort is Panurge's name. Alone
Thou must approach him.

NOVICE.

I obey.

PANURGE.

And tell him,
For certain, that to-morrow—at midnight—
I shall be with him.

NOVICE.

And if he should hang me?

PANURGE.

Thou wilt have had the honour, then, to perish
A martyr to the People's Cause.

NOVICE.

Long live
The People's Cause! . . (The devil take 'em all!)

PANURGE.

And now good day, good Citizen. Depart.
Forget not.

NOVICE.

Citizen General, I obey. (*Exit.*)

BRUTUS.

Why these half measures, these delays, Panurge?
Or to what end these midnight meetings with
The People's foes? these parleyings with a man
Like Orval? Had I but thy sanction then
When I besought it, Orval at this hour
Had not been living. And that snare of thine
To catch him flying hath fail'd egregiously.
Flight? he is in the field against us now,
First, foremost, and sole formidable foe!
Panurge, when I vow'd to follow thee,
To admire thee, to obey thee—when I made
Thee master of my mind,—it was because
I then believed thee master of thine own:
A man of keen eye and sure hand: a man
Of one aim, and one blow.

PANURGE.

Peace, prattler, peace!

BRUTUS.

All is in readiness. The arms are forged,
The cannon cast, the powder magazined,
And the battalions drill'd, and the lists drawn.
Our troops wait only for the word to move.
The lightnings and the thunders of our power
Vibrate impatient in thy slack right hand.
Speak the word only, and the thunder falls.

PANURGE.

Rash boy! thy hot brain and o'erweening youth
Know not the majesty of restraint. Mistake not
Impulse for power.

BRUTUS.

Nay, think, Panurge! think!
Already these amazed aristocrats
Terrified, trembling, fly like a tame herd
That scents the unseen lion. Abandoning
To desolation their doom'd palaces,
And paper-palisaded castles all,
They have assembled their unscatter'd strengths
In the firm-mason'd Fastness of St. John.
We with our legions need but flood the land
To overwhelm them in their last retreat.
Our dogs might in a day destroy such rabbits
In such a warren. Give the word.

PANURGE.

Not yet.

What need of haste? Their doom is sure. Effete
Both morally and physically, weak
Old toothless lapdogs whelp'd by Luxury,
Nature, the hardy mother of brave men,
Spurns them with loathing from her wholesome lap.
And, whether it be to-morrow or to-day
That we exterminate the litter, boy,
It matters not the weight of a hair. Go to.
I know my hour.

BRUTUS.

What daunts thee, then?

PANURGE.

Nought daunts me.
I am but the Doomsman. Nature is the Judge.

BRUTUS.

Albeit, when Nature's voice cries to thee "Strike!"
What stays thy laggard hand thus?

PANURGE.

Mine own will:
Thy master, Lucius, Junius, Brutus.

BRUTUS.

Psha!
Thy will? who knows? Thy whim, more like. And I,
Whose hand hath smitten upon their guilty thrones
The consecrated tyrannies of time,
Whose knee was never crook'd to man or God,
Who fear no consequence, and spare no foe,
Am I to follow blindly the blind guidance
Of thy dark brain?

PANURGE.

Blindly. It is thine oath.

BRUTUS.

Thou art betraying us, Panurge!

PANURGE.

Tush!
Mistrust is the hobgoblin of weak minds.
For there where ignorance doth a darkness make,
Any old broomstick serves to make a fear.
But have a care. Speak not so loud, young man.
Some of my folk might hear thee.

BRUTUS.

Of *thy* folk?
Our folk! We have no spies here. And what then?
My speech is my true heart's ambassador
That scorns disguise, and boldly goes his way
To challenge Falsehood where he finds her. Man,
What if our folk *do* hear my voice?

PANURGE.

Why, then
I shall be forced to have thee shot, for daring
To raise it in my presence.
(*With sudden tenderness*).
Trust me, boy.
Have patience.

BRUTUS (*with emotion*).

Pardon! I forgot myself.
But (*earnestly*), Chief, I fear not death in any form.

And if my death be necessary, if
My death can help or serve the People's Cause,
Serve only, even, for salutary example,
Speak! I am ready to die.

PANURGE.

(An ardent mind!
This man *believes* and *hopes*. It is a pity
That such a happy man should ever die.
Earth hath too few of his thrice fortunate kind
And cannot profitably spare what she
So rarely is possest of.) Boy, think more.
Speak less. Grow older. *Live*. And in good time
Thou wilt be able to understand . . . Delay.
Are the new cartridges distributed?

BRUTUS.

Yes.

PANURGE.

Dost thou know no more of this Lord Orval?

BRUTUS.

No. Why? In truth, I care to know no more
Than is already known of that bad man.

PANURGE.

He hath assembled all his vassals. And they
Are faithful to him. They believe in him.
They follow him, and still look up to him.

BRUTUS.

A handful of born slaves! It is in us,
Faith's true force is incarnate.

PANURGE.

I would see him—
With mine own eyes . . . hear him—with mine own ears—
Not thine . . . and read the soul of this strange man.
Too proud he is! too proud. Pride must be humbled.
He should be one of Us.

BRUTUS.

He? One of *us?*
He, the *aristocrat!*

PANURGE.

No. He, the *poet.*
You understand not. Leave me.

BRUTUS.

Am I pardon'd,
Citizen General?

PANURGE.

Boy, wert thou *not* . . . But go!
Leave me. Thy life belongs to the Good Cause.
I charge thee keep it safe. Boy, thine own hand
Shall plant the People's Flag upon the towers
And rooftops of the Fastness of St John.
Now leave me.

BRUTUS (*going*).

Truly, he is a great man.
How could I doubt him? Out, base heart! (*Exit*).

PANURGE (*alone*).

Ay, Orval!

It must be with mine own eyes only, and only
In thine own face, that I the riddle read
Writ by the Destinies for thee and me.
Strange, that this man, alone of all the world,
Dares to resist me! What, compared to mine,
Is this man's strength? Nothing. It cannot weigh
A dozen grains of sand i' the scale. Some few
Raw boors, and stupid serfs, that follow yet
The blazoned boast of his affronting flag,
With that blind instinct of fidelity
That's ever in tame creatures. Nothing more.
Why do I wish to see, to hold discourse
With this one man? Hath my own spirit now been
Confronted, for the first time, with its peer?
Perchance its rival? . . . I must crush—*shall* crush
him.
But then? . . . O thou mysterious Power of Thought,
That in me sittest, weaving webs to catch
The buzzing folly of this brief fly, man!
Easier shalt thou deceive all human kind
Than thine own self. What? Art thou not the
thought
Of earth's unthinking millions? the bright soul
O' the brute material multitude? And thou,
Doubtest thou of thyself? What were but crime
In others, is, in thee, completed law,
Power fulfill'd and perfect. Thou hast given
A name to nameless masses of mankind,
A language to dumb droves of beasts of burden,
A soul to soulless human engines,—call'd
Forth out of formless chaos, and created
A whole world's manifest fabric in the form

And image of thyself, and breathed into it
A motion and a light. But thou thyself,
O soul, what art thou? shapeless? doubting? dark?
Uncertain of the goal to which thou goest?
Nay then, I swear it, soul, thou art sublime!

SCENE III.—*Sunset, which deepens towards the close of the scene. The Forest. Booths, tents, canvas encampments. Torchfires, and wandering lights among the distant trees. A space cleared in the midst, with a rude gallows erected. Men and women dancing round it. Various groups passing over the foreground.* ORVAL *and* THE NOVICE. *Orval advances, holding the Novice by the hand, who follows reluctantly. Orval is enveloped in a long mantle, and wears the Cap of Liberty.*

ORVAL.

Remember!

NOVICE.

On my life, my lord, I swear it!
I will return you safely—if myself
Do 'scape the perils you have put upon us
By this most desperate venture.

ORVAL.

Glance of eye,
Or turn of head, and at my foot thou liest,
A bullet in thy scull. Sir, I am arm'd.
And,—mark me!—I am risking my own life,—
Thine hath for me less value than a dog's.

NOVICE.

Hi! . . . You will crush my wrist-bone! Zounds, my lord,
Your hand hath iron claws! How must I serve you?

ORVAL.

Address me as a comrade—newly come.
What are those—dancing yonder?

NOVICE.

Round the gallows?
That is the new dance of the Libertines,—
Freedom's bolero.

ORVAL.

On, then! let us see it.

CHORUS (*of men and women, half naked, dancing round the gallows in caps of Liberty*).

Bread to eat! bread to eat!
Or we will have heads to gnaw.
We have cook'd the cooks that cook'd the meat,
And so we must eat it raw.
Hourrah!
For, that men should starve while there's flesh to carve,
Is neither logic nor law,
Hourrah!
Kings have had no pity on us:
Dance about the gallows!
Priests have had no pity on us:
Dance! dance, good fellows!

God hath had no pity on us:
Dance about the gallows!
Down, then, with God, and with Priests, and Kings!
Enough, and too much have we had of these things!
Dance, dance, good fellows!

ORVAL (*to a girl dancing*).

Wench, I rejoice to see thee step so brisk.
Thy leg is stockingless,—but, 'faith! 'tis stout,
And jigs it bravely!

THE GIRL (*dancing*).

God a' mercy, man!
This day hath kept us waiting long enough.
All my life long have I wash'd dishes up,
And scour'd floors,—ay, with never a good word,
Never a Thank-ye! Only cuffs and kicks,
And offal, when the dogs had had enough.
Damnation! it is time for me to feed
When I am hungry, sleep when I am tired,
And dance when the whim takes me!

ORVAL.

Dance, girl! dance!

NOVICE.

The devil on it, we must budge, my lord,
Or you will be discover'd.

ORVAL.

If I am,
'Twill be the worse for thee. Come further on.
What have we yonder?

NOVICE.

By the oak-stump?

ORVAL.

Ay.

NOVICE.

That is the Lackeys' Club.

ORVAL.

Why then, no doubt,
We shall find old acquaintances this way.

NOVICE (*aside*).

Ten thousand ducats to be out o' the wood!
This man is mad!

FIRST LACKEY.

Yes, friend: I had the honour
To slit *my* master's throat last night.

SECOND LACKEY.

Fine fellow!
Your health. I'm looking for my Baron still.

A VALET.

Citizens, pray let us admire ourselves!
Already—long ago—whilst blacking boots,
Even till our backs grew crookèd,—long ago,
Whilst curling wigs, and powdering noble pates,
Even till our own wax'd bald, . . . we felt within us
The glorious consciousness of our own rights.
Not vainly, have we stood behind the chairs
Of sage Philosophers, and heard them talk:

Whilst stirring up the chocolate we served them,
They stirr'd in us the philosophic soul!
Not vainly, by the tables of the great
Have we been watchers: secrets, grudged to kings,
Slipp'd out to us. And truly, if we cringed
To carry the bread-basket up and down,
Whilst for the banquet we did count out loaves,
We for the scaffold then were counting heads.
Ay! and if, when we pour'd the wine, we smiled,
It was because the wine began to smell
Already like the blood it was enriching
For us to taste hereafter! Drink, then, all,
Drink, Citizens, with me . . . health to our Club!

CHORUS OF LACKEYS.

Health to our Club! and to our President!
For he is a Philosopher. Drink death
To all our Masters! Live Philosophy!
Live Freedom, and the Rights of Man!

THE VALET.

My friends,
I thank you,—with emotion, not unworthy
The generous sentiments you have express'd.

CHORUS OF LACKEYS.

Broken! broken are the bonds of servile duty!
Burst at length in man's supreme emancipation!
From the boudoirs, perfumed sweet, of painted Beauty,
From the languid-lighted halls and haunts of Fashion,

From the satin-circled walls and scented ambers
Of the sleek and whisper-swarming antechambers
Of dethronèd Royalty,
And the primly-paced saloons of Art and Science,
We together are come forth to hurl defiance
On the victor-voice of Freedom, freely, under the free sky,
At the doors where courtiers cringe,
Slaves to every creaking hinge,
Creatures to a golden key, and students of a lie!

SEMI-CHORUS.

And the statesman, with his scheme
Of little frauds to cheat the state:

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

And the poet with his theme
Of little flatteries to the great:

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

And the soldier, o'er his sword
Ducking to the slave he serves:
And the king, whose kingly word
Shifts each way his terror swerves!

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

And the dainty Damè of Honour
With the badge of shame upon her!

CHORUS.

We have seen, and we can tell
All that's hid 'twixt Heaven and Hell!

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

What was whisper'd shall be shouted!
What was trusted shall be doubted!
What was honour'd shall be scouted!

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

What was unknown all shall know!
What was high shall then be low.
For such secrets blood must flow.

CHORUS.

Ay, such filth to be wash'd clean,
Blood shall flow of King and Queen.
Such strange sickness needs strange cures.
This is our *Credo*. What is yours?

ORVAL.

Excellent company! Why these are men
Of rarest information,—full of matter!
What are those voices from the hill, that sound
Like wild beasts howling?

NOVICE.

'Tis the Butcher's Club.

CHORUS OF BUTCHERS.

Hatchet and axe
Shall pay no tax
To any king on his throne,
Whilst bones and blood
Are the People's food,
So keep ye the blood and the bone,

Hah ha!
Keep ye the blood and the bone!
We are The Jolly Butchers, we:
Our purple palace the shambles be.
Hither, good fellows, and sing with me,
Merrily, merrily sing;—
Cutting of throats is a rare good trade!
For love, or for money—'tis all one thing.
And it matters not if a knife be laid
To the throat of a calf or a king,
Hah ha!
For a calf will bleed like a king!
We are the children of Strength and Blood:
And we know what blood and strength can do.
It is we that find the People food.
Though the kings provide for the business too.
To every man his due, my friend,
To every man his due!
For the kings we have slaughter'd the calf and ox:
For the People we slaughter the kings.
While there's flesh in the shambles or blood on the blocks,
The Jolly Butcherman sings,
Hah ha!
The Jolly Butcherman sings:
Hatchet and axe
Shall pay no tax
To any king on his throne:
For bones and blood
Are the People's food,
So keep ye the blood and the bone,

Hah ha!
Make much of the blood and the bone!

ORVAL.

I like these fellows better. They, at least,
Have grace to leave Philosophy alone,
And spare us that vile cant, that sickens me,
Of Freedom, and Enlightenment, and so forth.
Madam, your Humble Servant!

NOVICE.

You forget!
Pray call her Citizen, or Freedom's Daughter,
Or else Emancipated Bondswoman.
You will destroy us with your old-world titles.
As you love life, be careful!

THE WOMAN.

Madam, quotha?
What is this fellow? Fy! O thou dost stink
Most villanous strong, methinks, of the old leaven!

ORVAL.

'Faith! my tongue tripp'd then.

THE WOMAN.

Man, I am as thou.
A woman—free—unfetter'd—independent!
My favours I distribute without stint
To that society whence I derive
The rights I exercise in doing thus.
To all free men, freely, I give my love.
Hark! .... an' thou hadst not such a frosty eye ....

Thou art a sturdy knave . . . . I like thee well . . . .
Kiss!

ORVAL.

And, pray, hath this same society
Given thee also, worthiest of women,
These jewels? that gold bracelet? those pearl earrings?
O most exceeding generosity!
O rare, beneficent Society!

THE WOMAN.

This trash? . . . and yet 'tis pretty . . . . truly, pearls
Suit well enough this sort of hair! . . . Nay, these
Were given me by my husband—I would say
My enemy—the enemy of Woman—
The enemy of Liberty and Love—
In the old days, ere I enjoy'd my freedom.
Husbands are Man's and Woman's Enemies!

ORVAL.

Freest of women, verily I wish thee
An infinite enjoyment!

(*They pass on.*)

Knowest thou
Who is yon soldier, leaning all alone,
I' the rocky ground, against the blasted oak?
How doth he eye the setting sun!

NOVICE.

He yonder?
Oh, he is Fortune's soldier. Brave enough!
But yet—a hireling. I do know the man.
The Revolution hath employ'd him thrice

In divers foreign countries. He has won
Nine battles—taken seven towns . . .
Good eve,
General Castrocaro! What! already
Planning campaigns? some new design a-foot?

THE SOLDIER.

Fools! Though in Freedom ye may be my brothers,
In Genius ye are not my kindred. Go!
My plans are known but by the victories
Which they achieve. Disturb me not. Away!

ORVAL.

Hark ye! Take my advice. Hang up that fellow.
Hang him to-night. This, trust me, is the stuff
That makes an Aristocracy.

A WEAVER.

Too late!
Curses, and maledictions!

ORVAL.

What is this?

NOVICE.

No beggar, or he would be better clothed.

ORVAL.

What dost thou there in the rank ditch, poor wretch?
Why, how now? Look! there is not so much skin
Upon this mummy, sir, as would suffice
To cover the whole compass of thy valour!

WEAVER.

Curses, and maledictions! Curse, and curse,

And curse, again, the Merchants of the Earth!

ORVAL.

This knave is strong in the arithmetic.
Hark, how he adds and multiplies! And yet
Methinks he doth repeat himself too oft.

WEAVER.

Accursèd be the Merchants of the Earth!
For they have suck'd the life-blood out of me.
My fairest years—the years when other men
Wander about the free and happy fields,
In blissful hand-in-hand with her they love,
And breathe the blessèd air, and the fresh flowers,
Till they bless God that they are young, and live,
And do enjoy the joyfulness of living,
I evermore was weaving my death-shroud
At their rapacious and remorseless looms;
Coffin'd alive in their damn'd factories!

ORVAL.

Drink, then, the cup thou clutchest in thy hand.
The wine will yet refresh thee.

WEAVER.

Late! too late!
I have no strength to lift it to my lips.
I have crawl'd here to die. Alas! for me
The Day of Freedom dawns too late. I curse
The Merchants of the Earth that do sell silk!
Ay, and the Princes of the Earth that wear it!
I curse the Trader, for he buys men's bodies!
I curse the Courtier, for his glossy coat

Is woven from the fibre of men's lives!
Curses, and maledictions! curses, curs— . . . .
(*He dies.*)

NOVICE.

Pah, what a hideous corpse! It stinks already.

ORVAL.

Look on this carrion, miserable hound!
Where now be your big-mouthèd promises?
Where be your virtues? your philosophies?
What now? the dust hath claim'd fraternity
With your free brother. Warn the worm away,
Lest he make free with this starved inch of Freedom;
For he is Nature's tyrant; and it seems,
He loves a savoury meal. Come, Citizen,
And study here the perfect state of man!
The Emancipation of the Human Race!

NOVICE (*aside*).

Insolent Noble! may thy carcase too
Rot ere 'tis older, and the dogs devour it!
(*Aloud*). My lord, we must away! The sun hangs low.
And I am sworn to give account this night
To him that sent me, of my mission.

ORVAL.

Hold!
I have a fancy to see more of this.
March! march, sir!

A VOICE FROM THE TREES.

Son of Freedom, bid good-night
To the old Sun!

ANOTHER VOICE FROM THE FOREST.

Good-night to thee, old tyrant!
I do salute thee with a parting curse.
Long while hast thou our hard taskmaster been.
Long hast thou driven us to labour, forth
From stall and shed,—to sweat, and still to groan;
Thou only smiling from thy golden chair
Up yonder, evermore the same damn'd smile.
To-morrow shalt thou find thy slaves set free.
Now to the devil with thee! off! give place
To the Dark Hour, our friend.

NOVICE.

Here comes a band
Of peasants. We must draw aside, my lord,
Or we shall be accosted.

PEASANTS (*passing*).

Forwards, friends!
Yonder, among the booths, the girls are dancing.
What fun! d'ye hear the fiddle squeak? up yonder
There's beer and wine, and cakes, and junketing.
And there our friends are roasting for us all
The oxen from the plough! Hourrah! hourrah!

A GIRL'S VOICE FROM THE CROWD.

March! march, old guts! This is a lazy lord.
Kick him up, wooden-shoes! That's right.

VOICE OF A NOBLE.

Good friends,
Mercy! I am an old man. Mercy! mercy!

A MAN'S VOICE.

The more sins, then, hast thou to answer, grey-beard!
Yah-ha! Oh, Kate hath got him. Take her off.
There's ne'er a terrier hath a sharper tooth
Than Kate. She'll kill him!

THE NOBLE'S VOICE.

Friends, if you would hear me!

A GIRL'S VOICE.

Give back my lover's blood, my father's curse!

A MAN'S VOICE.

Give back to me my long days of forced labour!

A WOMAN'S VOICE.

Give back my poor boy that was flogg'd to death!

A MAN'S VOICE.

Give back, give back to me my daughter's shame!

OTHER VOICES.

Up with him! By the devil's beard, old sir,
You shall hang high, as suits a gentleman!

THE NOBLE'S VOICE.

Children, . . . why I might be your father! Mercy!
Indeed I never meant you any wrong.

And, if I did you wrong and knew it not,
I do repent me. Look on these grey hairs.
An old man's blood, what can it profit you?
Sins have I, that is sure, to answer for,
But which among you must not say the same?
O let me live! take anything but life,
For that is robbing God, whose gift it is!
And I will give you up my parks, and manors,
My castles, and my summer villas all.
And you shall have my bailiffs, all of them,
To roast, or hang, or anything you please.
If these have done you wrong, I knew it not.

A MAN'S VOICE.

If you talk more, we'll put a pitchfork through you.
Come, hoist him! We shall miss the dancing else.

CHORUS OF PEASANTS.

A bluebottle fly of Beëlzebub
Came buzz'd on the hive of the working bees.
We have clipp'd the wing of this gilded grub,
And we bring him now to rot at his ease.
Their Lordships lordly carcases
Shall be thick as straw on the stubble lands.
When their castles burn like furnaces,
We shall have fuel to warm our hands.
As for us, who are hungry, and poor, and cold,
And weary enough of the long day's work,
We must have fire, food, slumber, and gold,
So up with the torch and the three-prong'd fork!

(*They pass on.*)

ORVAL.

I could not mark his features in the crowd,
Nor recognize his voice.

NOVICE.

No doubt it was
One of your Lordship's noble friends or kinsmen.

ORVAL.

Whoe'er he was, I care not. I despise him.
For he will die, a coward. Him I scorn,
And thee I loathe. Move on, sir! Here's a path
Should lead us somewhere. Bah! some day, who knows?
We shall make poetry of all this filth.
Come, sirrah! Do you hear me?
(*They disappear into the forest*).

SCENE IV.—*Night. Another part of the forest. Moonlight at intervals. In the background, the ruins of a Church, and in the midst of the ruins the Altar of Reason lighted. The ground broken and uneven. The scene frequently obscured. Confused noises in all directions.* ORVAL *and the* NOVICE.

ORVAL.

This fine red foolscap hath been torn to tatters
Down there i' the brushwood. What are those strange fires
Among the ruins?

NOVICE.

We have lost our way

In the low thickets. As I fancied, this
Must be the heart of the forest. Those red fires
Are from the altars of the New Religion,
Where Amathusius, nightly, at this hour,
Initiates the neophytes.

ORVAL.

Come on, then,
And let us look at the New Prophet!

NOVICE.

Softly!
Here every step is on the chance of death.
We are approaching to the sanctuary.
Cover thy face!

ORVAL.

Ay! round these steps are strewn
The ruins of the centuries! Here lies
The old colossus of the Christian World
Tumbled in splinters. Column, capital,
Arch, shaft, niche, statue, pedestal, and plinth,
A heap of undistinguishable stones!
My heel strikes on the images of saints.
Sharp morsels of stain'd glass, the costly work
Of noble masters who praised God with power,
And worshipp'd as they work'd, where'er I walk
Crackle and fly to bits beneath my foot.
The moon, it seems too, dare not look this way.
Have a care, sirrah, how you pick your steps!
Here 'tis pitch dark.
This should have been some cloister
Once,—by the clammy travertine that peels

Under my finger from the crumbled wall.
Pah! . . . and the frescoes here, do they sweat blood?
My hand is wet!
Thank heaven! a gleam of light
Shows yonder grating like the bars of Hell.
What have we here? A marble warrior sleeping
Upon a marble tomb. He hath not waked,
Though on his head the roof hath fallen down.
He must have fought hard to deserve such rest.
To sleep thus, were to be supremely blest!
For he that sleeps, sleeps for himself: but he
That waketh, knoweth not for what he wakes.
Where are we?

NOVICE.

Forty days, and forty nights
Our people toil'd here at the axe and crowbar.
We have destroy'd the last of all the churches.
This was the graveyard.

(*Distant songs faintly heard.*)

ORVAL.

Men of the new times,
Your songs delight me not! Before, behind,
Here—there—and everywhere, where'er I gaze,
Dimly I see faint shadows and pale lights,
That pass and wander all among these ruins;
From place to place they float on the night winds:
They hover to and fro, and find no rest,
But, with an ever-wavering motion, mix
Their lifeless ghosts among the living throng
Of men and women yonder. This night's heart
Must have a guilty conscience! Pause we here.

VOICES RAPIDLY PASSING ONWARDS.

First Voice. Hail, Brothers, in the name of Liberty!
Second Voice. Hail, Brothers, by the baptism of blood!
Third Voice. Hail, Brothers, to the Light of Reason, hail!
Fourth Voice. Haste! haste, or ye will be too late! The Priests
Of Liberty have all her altars lit.
The Psalm of Liberty is chaunting now.
Haste, Brothers, haste!

NOVICE.

It is too late to turn.
We must push onwards now. No help for it!
The vast crowd, swarming all this way, shuts fast
Each outlet in our rear. Pray, pray be cautious!

ORVAL.

Follow my finger yonder. What is he,
That man, whose form, upon the rolling smoke
Dilated, and by smoky vapours curl'd
Laöcoön-like, looks risen from out the fire?
Red-lit by those infernal flames, his face
Is as a fallen angel's. And his voice,
Blown hoarse this way upon the gusty dark,
Is like a madman's.

NOVICE.

That is Amathusius,
The inspired Prophet of the Future. Round him
Behold his priests—philosophers, and poets,

Musicians, artists, writers;—at their feet,
The new-made votaries,—naked girls and boys.

ORVAL.

Ah ha! That is your Aristocracy?
Now show me him that sent thee.

NOVICE.

Him I see not.
He is not of these.

AMATHUSIUS THE PROPHET.

Daughter of Liberty,
Arise! approach! come to her Prophet's breast!
Come naked! come thou free from shame, and free
From ancient prejudice. Thou, chosen first,
Free Bride of Free Humanity! Deep, deep,
I drink the floated odours of thy hair!
Sweet, sweet! I drain the red love of thy lip!
Daughter of Liberty, upon thy brow
The goddess seals this consecrating kiss!

A GIRL.

I fly into thine arms! I pant for thee,
Prophet of Liberty! I love . . . I burn!

ANOTHER GIRL.

Behold! I spread mine arms out on the air
To reach thee, O Beloved! . . . I faint—I fall—
I pant with passion at thy feet! I writhe—
I grovel at thy throne! . . . I burn! I burn!

ORVAL.

The poor wretch is, indeed, in a convulsion.

NOVICE.

Oh, if you wait, you will see more of them.
This happens every night. But hark! . . .

THE PROPHET.

Behold,
I am transfigured, thrill'd, beatified!
Daughter of Liberty, from thine embrace
I gather inspiration. Hearken, all!
I am about to prophesy.

ORVAL.

The girl
Has fallen on the flint, now, in a fit.
Abominable profanation!

NOVICE.

Hist!

THE PROPHET.

Lo now! we twain, my delicate white witch,
We are the breathing symbols of a world
Ennobled, and regenerated. Mark!
Around us are the ruins everywhere
Of a benighted, but abolish'd, Past.
Our foot is on the altar and the shrine
Of a deposed Divinity. Rejoice,
All ye to whom, in us, hath been reveal'd
The bridals of the Better Day! Rejoice!

CHORUS OF WOMEN.

Blessèd thou among women, O bride
And beloved of the Prophet! Lo, we,
Thy sisters, exult in the pride
Of ourselves consecrated in thee!

THE PROPHET.

Hark! I proclaim a new world! a new God!
The People's God: the God of Happiness,
Pleasure, and Plenty! The old God of Sorrow
Sinks, with the ruins of a world of tears,
Smit by the Light of Reason, to the abyss!
Blood must wash out the traces of past pain,
And we will dig the earth with graves to hold
The griefs that have been walking to and fro
Upon her surface till they grew too many.
Those that would save the altars of the Past
Shall perish on them. I have prophesied.

CHORUS OF MEN.

Destroy'd are the temples of Pride and Oppression!
And unmorticed the hands from the bodies of those
Who built them of old. We have offer'd Priests' flesh on
Each fane whence the Priest hath bless'd Liberty's foes

ORVAL.

Mine eagle! O mine eagle! yet fulfil
Thine auguries of old! Mine Eagle, rise!
And of the bones of all these murderers
I will rebuild anew the Church of Christ!

A MULTITUDE OF VOICES.

Liberty, Liberty, and Happiness!
Pleasure, and Love! Hourrah! hourrah!

CHORUS OF PRIESTS.

Where now
Are the Kings, and the Princes, and Priests,

With their mitres, and sceptres, and ermine,
Who prey'd on the People like beasts?

CHORUS OF ASSASSINS.

We have made a clear house of the vermin!

FIRST ASSASSIN.

I slew the first king!

SECOND ASSASSIN.

I the second!

THIRD ASSASSIN.

I

The third!

THE PROPHET.

Be ye exalted, in the day
Of exaltation, men of the red hand!
For ye among the chosen have been chosen,
And ye among the saints are sainted most!

CHORUS OF ASSASSINS.

Through midnight, a midnight band,
Do we walk the troubled land,
With the knife hid in the hand.

THE PROPHET.

Daughter of Liberty, awake! arise!
Sleepest thou, Daughter? Sleep no more,—no more!
(*The Thunder bursts overhead.*)
Hark! The free elements, the everlasting
Sublime Destroyers, call to us! . . . to us,
The Children of Destruction! we that are
As thunder and as lightning searching earth

To desolate, and purify with fire!
The Ignorance of Nations hath ascribed
To our free kindred of the skies, till now,
Co-partnership with human Slavery:
And, in the various fablings of mankind,
The thunder ever was the slave of Power.
First, antique Kronos, then Olympian Zeus,
And last, the Christian's Triple Tyrant, claim'd
Dominion of the desolating bolt.
Yet is it, rather, Nature in revolt
That frets her old confine, and utters forth
These revolutionary voices, dash'd
From the deep heart of discontent,—and streaks
The sky with fiery protest!
Wake! Arise!
Oh! if the thunders ever served the gods,
Then serve they, now, that New Divinity
Whose ministers we are! But they are free
Of the free heaven,—as we of the free earth.
For there is no more God in Heaven,—and soon
On earth there will be no more worshippers!

ORVAL.

There was a time,—if I had heard this noise
In heaven, I would have held it for a sign,
And cried ... God wakes! Beware!
But Thou, O God,
Hast Thou, Thyself, in Thine eternal toil
At setting things to rights, which presently
Go wrong again,—hast Thou, too, lived to feel
What to Thy creature is the last result

Of Thy grand gift of life,—this weary longing
For utter self-forgetfulness?
Alas!
Through every hideous mask of yon mad dance
Still must I recognize the mocking eyes
Of mine own hopes?—those phantoms of my youth
That, in life's unattainable distance seen,
Once seem'd so fair,—changed, by what wicked spell,
To gross and foul realities; which yet,
Even in their basest degradation, keep
(Like fallen and degenerate Spirits, transform'd
Into the mimics of their former selves
On that infernal stage where imps of Hell
Are apes of Heaven) strange semblance horrible
Of their original beauty!
Fearful Shape,
Whose maniac mouth with bloody spume is smear'd,
And round whose lurid robe is LICENCE writ
—Fell Antic, marshalling this monstrous Masque!
Art thou not she that, clad in glorious beams,
Fair as the Future, solemn as the Past,
And far as both from life's dull Present, once
Stood o'er me, murmuring "I am LIBERTY"?
And thou, grim Giant with the gory club
And brutish brow, methinks through all disguise
I know thy face, though fairer face was thine
When first I hail'd and named thee BROTHERHOOD,
And with rash voice, invoked thee from afar,
Whom, being come, I loathe! Oh, Circe's wand
Is on us here! and noble Spirits, that sail'd
Bold over perilous seas to win life's prize,

From heroes turn'd to hogs and wolves, with howl
And grunt proclaim the moral of their lives
Whom love of beauty lured, from their safe home
In happy human carelessness of life's
Eternal incompleteness, to pursue
Impossible Ideals. We are fool'd
By time, and plagued with granted prayers. Henceforth
Let man, whose realm is in the Actual, leave
To the great God, what, by the greedy grasp
Of his impatient passion, man destroys,
—The Ideal Beauty! I am sick of hope.

(*The storm increases.*)

What? you untutor'd Spirits of the Storm,
Have ye learn'd nothing from your past defeats?
To-morrow, will you be fast chain'd again:
To-morrow, the old forces, the old forms,
The old legitimate authorities
That keep things in their places, will come back,
And, laughing, look you out of countenance!
Then must you be humiliated much
By smiling heavens, mock'd by little breezes,
And baffled by a sunbeam! Wretched rebels,
Roll on! you can get nothing by this noise.
I, too, know these hysterics. Be at peace!

THE PROPHET.

Daughter of Liberty, come forth! Descend!
Now must we march once more our midnight rounds,
To institute Destruction in the House
Of this Old God that by the People's voice
Hath been deposed. Forth! forth! Awake, I say!

THE GIRL (*awaking*).

For thee! . . for thee . . . and all mankind . . . I burn
With love . . . with love!

ORVAL.

Who is the giant yonder
That bars their progress, with his brawny bulk?
A mere youth, yet a giant! Mark him now.
He is speaking with your Prophet.

NOVICE.

Hell and devils!
By all that's desperate, 'tis he!

ORVAL.

'Tis who?

NOVICE.

The Modern Brutus. And they come this way.
We are both dead men!

ORVAL.

Thou poor poltroon! hide here
Under my cloak . . . . But, if thou shakest thus,
I'll strangle thee!

NOVICE.

For mercy's sake, away!

ORVAL.

No! I will see this farce out to the end.
What are those women, dancing in the ruins,
Among the smouldering embers, robed like queens?

NOVICE.

Those yonder? They are Countesses, Princesses,

Great ladies that have left their wedded lords,
And have embraced the New Religion, here.

ORVAL.

Methinks I could weep now, if this were not
The very scorn of scorn! O women! women,
Whom we have loved, and honour'd, ay! and served,—
Loved with the loyal heart of honest man,
That fears no falsehood where he trusts all truth!
Honour'd on knightly knee, with tender homage,
Half deïfied with holy poesies,
And held unsullied in the secretest shrine
Of things divine within us! . . Served, ah God!
Served with the soldier's sword, the poet's pen,
And all the thousand nameless services
Of silent adoration, that make strong
The better portion of men's days and deeds!
Were ye not mothers, daughters, sisters, wives?
Our mothers, and *our* daughters, and *our* sisters?
And we almost have worship'd you as angels!
Why then, . . . why then, God bless my Grandmother!
For we will yet be merry.

NOVICE.

They are firing
The chancel yonder!

ORVAL.

What, then, do we fight for?
Homes without love, hearths without honour left!
Veronica, thy pure soul is in Heaven.
I am glad of it!

A VOICE FROM BENEATH.

Now for an epitaph,
Pious, pathetic, but yet not too long!

ORVAL.

Peace, mocker! or speak only to my *mind*.
My *heart* thou knowest not.

NOVICE.

They pour this way!
We are dead men. Curse this aristocrat,
For he will be the death of me!

THE PROPHET (*advancing, and to Orval*).

How, Brother?
What art thou, that dost look thus sad and haughty?
Why art thou not, here, in the midst of us?

NOVICE.

Lost! lost!

ORVAL.

I am of the Destroyers also.

PROPHET.

Whence?

ORVAL.

From a distant Brotherhood, new come.
I saw your fires far off, and follow'd them.

THE MODERN BRUTUS.

Who is thy fellow? wherefore doth he hide
His head, thus, in thy cloak?

ORVAL.

My younger brother.
A vow is on him, not to show his face
Till he hath murder'd—at the least, a Baron.

PROPHET.

And whom hast *thou* slain, Brother?

ORVAL.

I was sworn,
Only upon the eve of my departure
From Spain, a member of the Spanish Club.

MODERN BRUTUS.

For whom, then, hast thou destin'd the first blow
Of thy yet unslaked steel and virgin hand?

ORVAL.

For thee! . . . . . if thou betrayest us.

MODERN BRUTUS.

Good! good!
Here, Brother, take my dagger.

ORVAL.

Brother, mine
Will serve the purpose.

CHORUS OF ASSASSINS.

Live the Modern Brutus!
Live the Assassin of the Spanish Club!

CHORUS OF POETS.

Little leg to little foot:
And now a little body to 't:

Little face to little feature:
We have made a little creature.

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

Next a little claw, to fight with,
And a little tooth, to bite with,
And a little paunch to fit.
Who knows what may come of it?

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

Though the limbs be small and pliant,
They may grow, and make a giant.

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

Give it, now, a little tongue;
And a little word to utter.
It will talk when it grows strong.
Hark! the lips begin to mutter.

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

Though the voice be faint and weak,
Earth shall shake when it can speak.

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

Make it little wings, to fly
Over earth and over sky;
Wings shall sprout on either shoulder:
It shall soar when it grows older.

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

Wings of butterfly just now:
Wings of eagle soon will grow.

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

Choose we now a little name
To call the little creature by,
And be sure 'tis still the same
When it waxes stout and high.

CHORUS.

Nay! no name yet. Let it be
Naked, nameless, wing'd, and free
As the Son of Cytherea
When to Psyche's couch came he:
Felt, not seen,—a young Idea!

VOICES IN THE DISTANCE.

Away! the breeze that's in the trees
Hath warn'd us not to stay.
The dark grows thin. The birds begin.
The dawn's at hand. Away!

NOVICE.

The night is ending.

DISTANT VOICES.

To the East! the East!

NOVICE.

The forest will be emptied in an hour.

ORVAL.

But who come yonder?

NOVICE.

We shall presently
Distinguish their appearance. They approach us.

CHORUS OF PHILOSOPHERS.

From its helpless infancy
In the film-eyed ages, we
Have wean'd the Human Race, my friend:
Nurst the bantling on the knee
Of divine Philosophy;
Taught the child its A,B,C.
And given it a name and a place, my friend.
Now the course o' the world is free,
And we are the first in the race, my friend!

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

Like a long-delay'd sunrise
That all at length, and all at once,
Leaps among the cloven chasms
Of the Dawn, in sudden spasms
Of inextinguishable laughter,
Till all the wonder over-runs
The riven East with red surprise,
And every cloud that roof'd the skies
Burns like a blazing rafter,

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

Even so, though sunken long
In gulfs of darkness, down among
The old benighted centuries,
To our invocation wakes
The Light of Truth with a heart of fire,
Eagle plumes and sanguine eyes;
And with a sudden splendour takes
Earth and skies, to so comprise
A whole world's long desire!

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

Like a trumpet sounding on
Men to die at Marathon,
Like the clash of sword on shield,
Triumphing the trampled field,
Clash'd on purple plains Platæan,
Hark! from hill to hill, the pæan
Of the People's Liberty!
Comrade of the conquering cause,
Whom the gust of combat draws
Out of darken'd lands, on high
Lo! the light of larger laws
Flooding all Futurity!

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

Pilgrim from the land of night,
Superstition's home for ages,
Thou, lured hither by the light
Pour'd by us upon the pages
Of the ancient Book of Life,
Thou shalt open with a knife
What was sealèd from the sight
Of the schools and of the sages.

DISTANT VOICES.

Hark hark! the watch-dogs bark!
The east is growing grey.
The red cock is crowing, hark!
Comrades, come away!

AN ASSASSIN.

Hail to thee, comrade! hark! . . . I drink thy health
In this old skull of an old Saint. Good-night!
(*He throws the skull to Orval, and passes.*)

CHORUS OF ASSASSINS.

The arrow flieth in the noon.
The sickness walks below the moon,
And so walk we.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Brother follow! through the hollow
Night thy comrades call to thee!

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

Hist! hist! The moon's in a mist.
There is a ghost walking over the lea.
Well I wist what he hides in his fist,
For he mutters and talks
To himself as he walks,
But he doth not wish that the world should see.

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

Over wood and over water,
Hark! I hear the howlet's daughter
(He hath daughters three!)
Call her sisters, "Come and slaughter
The rats in the hollow tree.
We may do as we list, for the moon's in a mist,
And nobody now can see."

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

When the night had kill'd the day,
I did hear the lion say
To the leopard . . . "Come away,
Brother leopard! here is prey."

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

I have seen the Destroyer,—the Angel
That beareth the final evangel,
Descending with blood on his wings,
To purchase of priests and of kings
The earth for a burial-ground,
To bury the Old Dead God.
He survey'd it, and measured it round
And across with his measuring rod.

CHORUS.

As the dog-fish through the dark
Of his dismal world doth sail,
Never swerving from his mark,
Where he tracketh a sick whale;
Even so, do we go
Up and down, and to and fro
By a road without a name,
With a meaning and an aim,
And a hate that shall not fail.
Following still, and still pursuing,
Over regions red with ruin,
Evermore some kings undoing,
Speed we on our trail!

DISTANT VOICES.

The wan stars sink beneath the brink

Where the cold-tided day
Whitens night's shore, and still flows o'er
Faint, but how fast! Away!

FIRST DANCING GIRL.

Kill for me, Brother, Prince Lois!

SECOND DANCING GIRL.

And kill for me, Brother, Duke John!

FIRST DANCING GIRL.

Go to, thou, with thy noise!
Let the old one be first made away with!

DANCING CHILDREN.

Goodman knave! we have broken our toys.
Bring us the head of a noble to play with,
Or the crown of a king . . . what fun!

CHORUS OF ARTISTS.

Here's a new temple to build, my friend,
The People's new Faith,—to enshrine it:
And we, the men of the modern guild, my friend,
We are the folks to design it.

FIRST ARTIST.

Gothic is out of date.

SECOND ARTIST.

And nobody cares for Byzantine.

CHORUS.

No! Let it be something great,
Stately, and elephantine!
Builded strong shall be every column,

Of twelve dead kings in a circle solemn:
And the capitals shall be bossy and full,
Each boss made out of a noble's skull.
And the gory locks shall drip evermore
Rare tracery red of the richest gore!
Art is immortal,—'tis true, my friend!
But meanwhile, sometimes her servants starve.
Now we have found something new, my friend,
Better than marble to cut and carve.

(*They pass*).

DISTANT VOICES.

The night is passing: the dawn is at hand.
Hasten away, o'er the wasted land!

NOVICE.

Away, my lord, away! the ground is clear.
We may escape unnoticed.

ORVAL.

Silence, cur!
Once more, once more ere I depart, once more
Seek, O my soul, to compass palpably,
And set before thee in a single shape,
Distinct to thought, the whole circumference
Of this infernal chaos, which some fiend
Frees roaring from the riven womb of Time
To overwhelm creation!
What hath made
This brute beast tame hath made me fierce. 'Tis well!
Oh I had need enough of this strong wine,
To wake the drowsy heart that in me dwells,
And sting my spirit back to life again;

For, by the mass! it is a weary world,
And I am sick of watching it! so sick,
I would be well content to sleep it out,—
Even as God doth! But I thank thee, Scorn,
For thou hast made me man! Come, Horror! come,
And harrow all my heart! Come, bitter Rage,
And wring me to the nerve, that I may roar
Defiance, till I crack the sleepy doors
Of Heaven's indifferent Justice, and break up
This maddening silence! Resolution come,
Though from the midriff of Despair, and mail
My manhood up in iron purposes!
O for one echo of the Fiat, heard
In Heaven, what time the Sons of Morning sang
To see the cosmic beauty of a world
Forth issuing from the formless infinite!
He that should ever hear within himself
That word of God re-echoed from the Past,
And save thereof one syllable of Power
To re-create creation . . . soul of mine,
That man would be . . .

VOICE FROM BELOW.

A little God-Almighty!

ORVAL.

Who spoke then?

NOVICE.

Nay, not I. Let us away.

ORVAL.

Well! if it be not mine,—the nobler part,
To heal and to regenerate,—be it mine,

What yet remains,—to crush, and to subdue!
Ay! when the lion dies, why let the bees
Build houses and make honey in his carcase.
The lion lives, though; and his heart in me
Is beating yet! O, swift, mine eagle, swift
And fierce thy flight be!

NOVICE.

Dawn is breaking yonder.
And I shall die of ague in these dews.

ORVAL.

Let us descend, then. Put me on my way,
And I will free thee, when we reach the valley.

NOVICE.

Where wilt thou drag me, through this boiling mist?
Halt! I can go no further.

ORVAL.

March! Down there
The torch-fires dwindle in the vaporous dells:
The cries and songs of last mad night's mad revel
Faint off along the forest.
(*The dawn becomes faintly visible. A pale light creeps over the scene, and the mists begin to rise and move.*)
Dost thou mark
Upon yon white and rolling vapours borne
Among the haggard forest trees, whence yet
The night-dews drip, pale shadows passing by?
Hear'st thou no moan upon the morning air?

NOVICE.

I see not anything but the raw mists:

Hear nothing but the tumbling stone that falls
From precipice to precipice beneath us.
Come! or we shall be founder'd in the fog!

SPIRITS PASSING IN THE MIST.

Mourn for the Dead Christ, mourn!
Where have they buried our Lord?
In the heart of the mad world's scorn?

ORVAL.

Ah God, for my horse, and my sword!
I will hew Thee a cross out of every tree,
To crucify them that have crucified Thee!

THE SPIRITS (*passing*).

By the shrines, among the tombs,
Was our blissful twilight dwelling.
Through the glories and the glooms,
Did our bosoms bear the swelling
Silver psalm, and the sonorous
Anthem's solemn-chanted chorus,
And the organ's deep Amen,
From the golden pipes out-welling
Music to the hearts of men.
Whither shall we seek new dwelling,
Sisters?

SPIRITS OF THE BELLS.

Ah, there is no telling!
All the world is changed since then.
From the swallow-swarmèd steeple,
From our homes in happy bells,
To the hearts of faithful people
Over fields, and floods, and fells,

Did our white wings, music-haunted,
Bear sweet invocations, chaunted
By the silver Sabbath chimes;
And in lonely forests daunted
Savage creatures from their crimes.
Now our homes are ruin'd wholly:
Now our haunts are no more holy;
And we wander, sadly, slowly,
Tenants of the troubled times.

SPIRITS OF THE CASEMENTS.

We, that lived among the gleaming
Garments of the sworded Saints,
In a rose and amber glory;
We, that sail'd the purple-streaming
Pageant, which the sunset paints
With a martyr's mighty story
On the calm Cathedral floor,
Underneath the flaming casement,
When the day is downward stealing:—

SPIRITS OF THE DOME.

We, that hung and hover'd o'er
Angels smiling sweet amazement
From the golden-misted ceiling,
In the glowing dome above;—

SPIRITS OF THE AISLES.

We, that shifted soft surprises
Of still light, where sinks or rises,
Through the palely-pillar'd grove
Shade of morning or of even;—

CHORAL SPIRITS.

Now upon the winds of heaven
Lurid-lighted with red levin,
Hither, hither, dimly driven,
Down the darkness do we move.
(*The sun rises.*)

ORVAL.

Ah, the sun rises! in whose golden beam
Their forms are melted from my sight. And now
They fade away across the pine-tree tops!

NOVICE.

There is the valley. Yonder lies your road.

ORVAL.

O blessèd dawn of day! O blowing breeze
Of the fresh morning! hail, thrice hail to ye!
Now . . . . JESU, AND MY SWORD!
Here fellow, take
The symbol and the thing together. Keep them.
Thou hast earn'd both.
(*Throws a purse, with the Cap of Liberty, to the Novice.*)

NOVICE.

I have your Lordship's word
Pledged to his safety, who shall visit you
To-night. But . . .

ORVAL.

Tush! away! We gentlemen

Break not our promise . . . JESU, AND MY SWORD!

VOICES (*answering from the valley*).

MARIA, AND OUR SWORDS! Long live our lord!

ORVAL.

Fare thee well, Citizen! Thou to thine own,
And mine to me. I do not envy, sir,
The knave that owns you.
Jesu, and Maria!
Jesu Maria, and our swords!
Friend, welcome!
(*He descends the valley.*)

SCENE V.—*Early morning. Valley and Woodland in the domain of Orval.*

ORVAL.

Through the deep quietness of these old woods
I walk unwelcomed. The offended flowers
Look on me, like the faces of lost friends.
Yet there is nothing I have won from life,
Nor anything I yet may hope to win,
That's worth to me what in the winning it
I have flung away—the friendship of such things!

THE VOICE OF MURIEL (*singing from the heart of the wood*).

The ivy hangs and the violet blows
Above and beneath in the bright June weather.
I breathe the breath of the bramble rose,
And I and the sweet birds sing together.

ORVAL.

O all that's left my of lost youth! How like
The music of the dirge of my dead heart
Sounds thy glad matin song to these sad ears!

THE VOICE OF MURIEL (*singing*).

Sing, happy bird, and rebuke the world
For its foolish cares and its empty deeds,
And its gods of clay and of gold, whose curl'd
Hot incense Tophet with darkness feeds.

ORVAL.

Blind! and I pitied, who now envy him!

THE VOICE OF MURIEL.

Mine eyes are shut: but my heart is not.
And my spirit *feels* what your eyes *see* merely,
The mighty mirth of our mother Earth,
When the glory of God on her face shines clearly.

ORVAL.

Poor flower, thou know'st not thou art perishing!
O you inexorable unjust Powers
That mock us with your seeming leave to choose
The paths on which you thrust us headlong, why,
Why have you ever whirl'd my life away
From all love's holding-places?

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL (*above*).

Foolish child!
Chide not the nursing hand that stole away,
To save for Love, the toys Love else had broken.

ORVAL.

What hath Love been to me? The Impossible.
And still for ever, The Impossible!
What was it that my vain youth loved? a dream,
A phantom, ever beckoning me away
To deserts, where it left me lone . . .

THE VOICE.

The Past.

ORVAL.

And now, life's journey well nigh o'er; when, tired,
I can scarce further fare, and fain would rest;
What's left for love to linger on? a child:
A life for ever beyond mine . . .

THE VOICE.

The Future.

ORVAL.

What, then, am I?

THE VOICE.

The Present.

ORVAL.

Mystic Voice,
That dost mine inmost questionings answer thus,
Yet further answer, What art thou?

THE VOICE.

The hour,
Orval, is not far off when thou shalt know.

SCENE VI.—*Night. The Tent of Panurge.*

PANURGE.

Wait me by the witch elm. And if thou hear
A pistol-shot, fired from the Castle, bring.
Thy fellows to the rescue. Otherwise
Wait me till dawn.

MODERN BRUTUS.

O head of all our hopes!
Once more I do conjure thee . . . . .

PANURGE.

Tush!

BRUTUS.

Yet think—
'Tis an aristocrat—the worst of all,
And the most desperate. Thou goest alone.
He, in the centre of his strength, is arm'd.

PANURGE.

Go to! Go to! This Old Nobility
Breaks not its word of honour.

BRUTUS.

But . . .

PANURGE.

The Prince
Of Darkness hath his commendable points,
His courtesies, and his punctilios.

We all must trust the Devil himself sometimes.
Farewell till dawn. Ho! lights without there!
Watch. (*Exit.*)

SCENE VII.—*Night. Manorial Hall in the Castle of Orval. Arms, blazons, and family portraits along the walls. In the foreground a marble table lighted by a brazen lamp. On the table a chart outspread, and beside the chart a sword and pistols, richly jewelled. In the background a smaller table, carved and gilded; the coverlet splendidly embroidered. Thereon a silver wine flagon and goblets. One side of the scene is closed by a carved screenwork, through which is the entrance to the hall, an open archway hung with tapestried curtains. On the other side a vast hearth, surmounted by an antique clock.* ORVAL *is seated at the table studying the chart. He looks up as the hand of the dial points to midnight.*

ORVAL.

Midnight! It was, methinks, at this same hour,
Upon the eve of battle and of death,
That the last Brutus, if the tale be true,
Beheld his Evil Genius. I await
A like encounter, haply a like fate;
Who, ere that unreturning traveller, Time,
Add to lost hours this night's now neighbour'd noon,
Here in my fathers' hall must, face to face,
Behold a being of no fathers' born;
A man without a birthplace or a name,
An apparition from the immense abyss
Of nothingness arisen (who knows?) to be
Perchance the father of an age not mine;
If I, lone champion of the kingly past,

Whose ghostly armies are the dead and gone,
Whose battle-cry is a world's epitaph,
Now fail to hurl this human portent back
Into the blackness of the bottomless pit,
From whence it issues. I? Ay, there's the point
Where stealthy thought creeps in to steal the heart
Of hardiest enterprise. What is my blood
To consecrate? Or is it yet so well
Worth saving from the slough wherein it sinks,
This marrowless and miserable frame
Of things, that styles itself Society?
The unkingly tenancy of kingly thrones,
The coalesced and concrete egotisms
Of Class, the unintelligence of Power,
The Church's great uncharity, and all
The organized hypocrisy of things!
Can man's wit cheat, against such desperate odds,
Nature's remorseless wisdom? Am I not
Leading a self-surrender'd host to fight
For an already-abdicated cause?
It may be. I devote myself to death
For that which haply cannot live. So be it!
Why, this is as I will. This is my strength,
This the respect that saves my self-respect.
For what I do, I do because I must,
With manly made-up mind, foursquare to fate,
Possessing perfectly what is mine own,
The deed; and careless of what is not mine,
Fate's dealing with it after it is done.
To calculate the gain or loss of it,
That would spoil all. What's failure? or success?
Nothing. They have no value in themselves.

They are base counters. What gives worth to them
Is just the so much of a man's own self
As he can stake upon them. Any man
May be a martyr to whatever cause
Can pay the price of martyrs' crowns. But he
That's martyr to his faith in martyrdom,
And gives himself to death, because he deems
To die for any cause is, in itself,
A nobler thing than any cause men die for,
That man hath surely won the perfect palm,
And I will win it! Were it possible
To contemplate success as being made
The measure of the value of the act
And its prescribed repayment, I might pause.
For who that champions any human hope
Through life's inhuman battle could accept,
Here in the witness of Eternal God,
Unscared, the dread responsibility
Of being answerable for success?
But loyalty to failure is at least
Absolved from shame, whatever be the event.
Souls of my dead forefathers, me, an arm'd
Lone watcher by your knightly tombs, inspire
With that undaunted scorn of doubt that once
I' the wondrous ages whence, with duteous rites,
My spirit invokes ye, did inspire yourselves
To those high deeds whereof I am the heir!
Last of the lion-hearts whose lordly life
Once fill'd those hollow images of men
With helmèd heads from yonder wall down bent
Above my own,—sole guardian of the hearth
Which your renown makes honourable yet,

Sole resolute remnant of your race and mine,
Fallen upon times that are not ours,—behold
In me whatever now remains on earth
To represent your virtues and your faults!

(*Clock strikes.*)

Be nigh me now! I am prepared.

MASTER ANDREW (*entering.*)

My lord,
The man that was expected is arrived.

ORVAL.

Admit him.

PANURGE (*entering.*)

'Give good even to your lordship!

(*Exit Master Andrew.*)

'Faith, I am ill at ceremonious turns
Of language,—phrases, titles!

(*Throws down his cap and mantle; and, gazing round him, eyes impatiently the arms and portraits on the walls.*)

ORVAL.

Sir, be seated!
I thank you for the faith you have reposed
In the reputed honour of this roof;
And thus, after the fashion of my fathers,
I pledge my guest.

(*Goes to the table in the background; pours wine; and offers a goblet to Panurge.*)

PANURGE (*taking the goblet mechanically; his eye still fixed on the armorial bearings, &c.*).

'Humph! ha! . . . . If I mistake not,
Yon daub of red and blue along the wall
Is, in the language of the dead and buried,
Call'd an escutcheon. 'Tis a kind of painting
Will soon be out of fashion.

ORVAL.

Sir, all fashions
That go come back again. What seems the newest
Is but the oldest, which, when it returns,
Is least remember'd: God having been pleased
To economize the invention of mankind.

PANURGE.

There spoke the son o' the Old Nobility!
I know the man . . . . opinionated, proud,
Arrogant, supercilious, nice in speech,
Reckless in deed, self-confident: whose thoughts
Are brazen gods the braggart Vanity,
That makes them, worships: and the man himself,
Her proselyte, prays to them never more
Than when no soldier in the field, no coin
Is left him in the coffer. Desperate men
Are ever frantic in their trust in God,
Not finding in themselves what can be trusted.
Their fears are fathers to their faiths.

ORVAL.

All force
Begins in fear; else fear were purposeless:

The force of forethrift in the fear of want,
The force of honour in the fear of shame.
But who fears God of all men least fears man.
Belief is nourisht at the mother breast
Of Providence: the beggar Unbelief
Lives on the alms of Fortune.

PANURGE.

Show me, then,
But so much only as the nether spark
Of that fire-barbèd bolt which is to fall,
Blasting the rabble and republican heads
Of our stark-naked unbelieving host;
Or but a feather of the wings of one
Of all those harness'd angels that are pledged,
Upon the invocation of your priests,
To smite our revolutionary ranks
And raise the siege about your harass'd halls.
Bid the bolt fall, or bid the angel smite:
And if, by fast or prayer, cross sign'd, hymn sung,
Or any other pious conjuring,
Thou canst compel them to perform the task
Assign'd them by the priesthood of thy faith,
Be that faith mine, Lord Orval!

ORVAL.

Friend, methinks
Thy humour lacks originality.
So old is Atheism, and so stale
That creed's vocabulary, I confess
That I had hoped speech newer from the man
Of the new epoch.

PANURGE.

Tut! all speech is trash
That takes transmitted value from the man
That speaks it, as from what to speak it moves him
He takes his own. Be what I represent,
Not how I represent it, thy concern.
My creed and its vocabulary both,
If old, are also new, as nature. Cries
Of half a world's intolerable wrong,
The wail of unrequited toil, the moan
Of martyr'd patience, the tumultuous shout
For knowledge from long-pining Ignorance pour'd,
The howl of human hunger, and the shriek
Of irrepressible protest, power no more
Can stifle in the angry heart of man,
—Demanding recognition of a race
In prejudice imprison'd, dogg'd by doubt,
By fear tormented, and by custom bound
To bestial habitudes; . . all these, light lord,
Are but the broken scatter'd utterances
Of that indignant Truth whose creed I preach,
Whose hand I arm, and whose retributive
Dominion trumpet-tongued I have proclaim'd
Above the annihilation of thine own!
This is the faith of millions that in me
Hath found a voice. As for myself, the sole
Divinity that I acknowledge now
Is the all-procreant intellect that rules
This restless brain; whose power, whate'er it be,
Suffices to give meat to starving mouths,
And hope to stricken hearts. Canst thou aver

The God thou worshipest hath ever been
As helpful to His worshippers?

ORVAL.

The God
My sires before me worshipt, with the faith
Which they bequeathed unspotted to their son,
I worship still. And He, that gave to them
Power and glory in their days of pride,
To me hath given, in mine hour of trial,
Patience to bear, and courage to withstand.

PANURGE.

Nay, then, but I will swear thee, by the book
Of thy good deeds, thou dost a devil serve.
Leave we, however, these absurd disputes
Unto the theologians; if, in truth,
There be yet theologians to dispute them.
To business, noble sir!

ORVAL.

Speak. I am dumb
To learn the cause and object of this most
Unsought and unintelligible honour.
Citizen God, I wait thine oracle.

PANURGE (*musingly*).

Ay. Wherefore am I here . . . thou askest.

ORVAL.

I?

Nay, sir, I did not question you.

PANURGE.

Proud host,
I question then myself: and to myself
Make answer: first, because I wisht to know thee
As man may know man, and to judge of thee
As man may judge of man.

ORVAL.

Licet videre
Virgilium . . . an interest, Virgil shared,
Doubtless, with each Numidian lion last
Arrived in Rome . . .

PANURGE.

In the next place, because
I wisht to save thee (do not frown, Lord Orval!)
As man would save man, if he could.

ORVAL.

Save *me?*
For thy first wish I thank thee. For the second
My thanks I needs must keep, sir, for my God,
And my good sword.

PANURGE.

Thy sword? thy God? words, names,
Nothings! But hearken. Multitudes of mouths
Shriek for thy blood. Strong hands, gaunt arms, are stretcht
To seize thee. What is thy defence? A few
Handfuls of men, ill arm'd, ill fed, a few
Handfuls of earth—scant room for tall men's graves.
Where is thine ordnance? where thy foundries,—stores

Of siege? thy muniments of war? Where, most
Of all, the valour of thy followers—troops
They are not? Where the manliness in whose
Behalf thou dost thy manhood sacrifice?
Come, come! I talk, my lord, to no blind fool,
No blundering blockhead. Were I in thy place,
I know what it were best that I should do.

ORVAL.

Sir! . . . I am patient.

PANURGE.

Well, then . . . hark! Were I
Lord Orval, I would say to this man here,
This man that had a whim—a trick o' the heart,
A start of nature—call it what you will—
To so think of me, that he came by night
Out of my foeman's camp, companionless,
With no guard but his faith in my good word,
To save my life . . . this man who offers me,
In the frank name of Friend, a title won
From something nobler than the gewgaws daub'd
On yonder garish wall . . a title, man,
Refused to thousands that revere him, even
As God, and follow him as Destiny,
—Were I the man that you, Lord Orval, seem,
And you the friend I speak of—I to him
Would say "Alliance between thee and me!
Mine army I disband, my lordship keep,
Lands, manors, seignories, and titles all,
Upon the faith of his full-plighted word,
Who fearless trusted to my own his life."
Thine age, Lord Orval?

ORVAL.

Whatsoever age
Hath grace of God to be the least like yours, sir.
Inquisitor, what is mine age to thee?

PANURGE.

Methinks, if nothing but the timely frost
Of life's eventual winter should in thee
Obstruct the springs of nature, they have yet,
Ere they shoot o'er the fall, some fifteen years
Through which to flow. For life in men like thee
Flows fast, and soon flows out. Thou should'st be young.
On that pale face passion, not time, hath prey'd,
And thy frame, firmly mason'd in the form
Of noblest manhood, might defy decay
For yet another half of human life
Stretcht to the longest, if the life that frets
Its fiery channels through those violent veins
Were of more sluggish element.
(*He muses.*)
So be it!
Be one gap golden in the iron rule
Of the inexorable Necessity,
One head exempted from the curse of all!
What harm in that? No! live, Lord Orval! live
The last of all the nobles of this land!
Keep thy broad fields and thine ancestral halls,
Thy bright excepted title keep. To us
Surrender but the drivellers, dotards, dolts
Of that doom'd class thou canst not save. Stand off,

Or at *my* side stand safe. Leave room and way
For the arm'd Justice of the Revolution,
Whose victims, they: whose pontiffs I and thou,
Co-Cæsars, partners in the purple robe
Of more than Roman power. To thee I pour
This first libation!

(*Drinks.*)

ORVAL.

Grant me patience, Heaven!
Sir, I have listen'd. Are we at the end?
Each word that, in the pictured presences
Of my dead fathers, you have dared to speak
To me their son, has been an insult. Well,
I have listen'd. Have you more to add? But no,
By Heaven, Citizen General, forbear!
Patience is human, and must end at last.
Inflict no more upon my knowledge that
You stand here safe, sir, in my knightly word,
And under the asylum of my roof.

PANURGE.

Thy roof! thy word! O Pride, thou hast many names!
What? with the old and tatter'd rags long dropt
From the broad banner of Humanity,
Think'st thou to patch and purfle and trick out
The naked Vanity that still goes bare?
Tinsel! still tinsel! and still shame behind!
Man, man, there's life in that fast-swelling vein,
Warm life in that flusht brow and flashing eye.
And yet I tell thee all this vigorous life

Thou hast coupled to a corpse. Go to! To me
Names are but nothings. Dost thou think I wince?
No, for thou canst not look me in the face
And swear, by the oath of a gentleman, that thou
And thine deserve not death: and, after death,—
Oblivion!

ORVAL.

Ha! And thou and thine, what else
Have ye deserved?

PANURGE.

Life! Victory! Hearken why.
There's but one law of things immutable,
Invincible. 'Tis that which doth compel
The world to pass out of one phase of life
Into another, and so ever on.
And by this law already thou and thine
Have been condemn'd, as old, weak, overfull,
To pass away, and so make room for us
That be young, strong, and hungry. Strive no more
With fate. *Væ victis!* Yield; for we must have.

ORVAL.

Ah, boaster! sole of mortal men, to thee
Hath Destiny her hidden mind reveal'd?
That thou should'st menace me with victory?
Thou man of clay, thou creature of a chance!
Not less than all that are of woman born
Mark for the first ball in the battle-hour,
Or the first stroke of any sabre slasht
At hazard through the cannon's smoky breath!

PANURGE.

Do not deceive thyself, Lord Orval. Me
Fate, my wise mother, head and foot, hath dipt
In the invulnerable lake. Along
The paths I tread Chance walks not. Mortal foes
I scorn. Nor sword can strike, nor bullet pierce
Me that am mail'd in Nature's iron, until
My being shall have ceased to be to thine
A dread Necessity. When from my path
Hath perisht all obstruction, wheresoe'er
That path may lead me matters not. My work
Will have been done. But hark! Time mocks at us.

(*Clock strikes.*)

Man, I must leave thee to thy fate. One word!
If thou be weary of thine own life, still
Thou hast a son. Save him.

ORVAL.

The safety, sir,
Of that pure soul is in God's keeping. Here,
On earth, the son's place is beside the sire.

(*Buries his face in his hands.*)

PANURGE.

Ay, meditate! For meditation is
Fit neighbour to the grave.

ORVAL.

Away, wild fool!
Thou knowest not what passes here,—nor canst!
Sir, if in your low nature there be depths

I fathom not, there yet are heights in mine
You cannot scale. Keep thou thy world. Leave mine
To me.

PANURGE.

My world? I have none. I keep nothing.
Slave of one thought, and bondsman to one form!
With every impulse of my will I make,
And, having made, destroy a hundred worlds.
Nor can thy fancy image, even in dream,
My mind's unfrontier'd realm.

ORVAL.

Abortion born
Of Nature in decline! thy boasted sense
Is barren to conceive what is the strength
Of those whose noble fixity of faith
O'er fortune's fleeting sands is founded firm
Under the present in the solid past.
Look yonder on the images of those
Whose life in me is living. Scan their forms,
Their faces mark! On every noble brow
The selfsame blood is eloquent: the same
High thought shines clear from every kingly eye.
That blood in me yet flows, and in my heart
That thought, the patriarchal heritage
Of honour'd lives, is resolute. But thou,
Man of the day that hath no yesterday,
Where is thy native land? thy homestead where?
Thy wandering tent is every evening pitcht
Upon the ruins of thy neighbour's hearth,
Thy march is every morn to rapine new.

But home of thine thou hast not, wheresoe'er
Men honour yet the memory of their sires.

PANURGE.

Honour their memory by all means! Well
Have I been studying all this while, my lord,
The list of your illustrious ancestors.
See if I have not . . . "mark'd their faces, scann'd
Their forms" exactly! This grave Councillor
Grill'd Jews and roasted witches to the taste
Of priestly palates,—the approved head-cook
And caterer to that cannibal, the Church.
Well, I admire the beard of him, and praise
The barber's skill that trimm'd it. This one here
Was a King's Chancellor, and had in charge
The Great Seal, and sign manual. They served him,
Upon occasion, to forge documents,
Falsify acts and deeds, buy judges, rob
The public treasure, and appropriate
The private property of lesser men.
Yonder fine fellow, with the soft black eyes,
White ruffles, and smooth chin, only seduced
The wives and daughters of his friends. But here
Comes next a Patriot who proudly wears
The Golden Fleece, which paid the services
Of his sword's hiring by the Spanish King.
That noble lady in the stainless silks,
With swanlike throat, and stately brow serene,
She was her footman's mistress. This one here,
With such a glory of gold curls, and such
Unstinted revelation of rich charms,
Was a king's concubine. Behold, my lord,

The spotless fountains of your lineage fair
And noble! But the Judgment Day draws nigh.
And O be sure that we ignoble men,
Whose mean task is to ply the rope and axe,
Shall not forget these most illustrious lords,
Nor yet their worthy offspring.

ORVAL.

Slanderer!
Son of our serfs, thou liest in thy throat!
Had not my noble fathers shelter'd thine,
Thou hadst not stood before me to blaspheme
Their honest names. And when, from out the herd
Of animal brutes they had for ages been,
Thy base begetters did at last begin
To emerge into humanity, it was
Our fathers that for thine built churches, schools,
And taught them human duties. Wretch! thy curse,
Shatter'd, from off their ancient glory falls
As once of old in fragments fell the brand
Of the black Painim from the stainless shield
Of Christendom's pure Knighthood. Thee and thine,
Do I not know ye? Sir, I have visited
Your rabble camp. I know you all. Your mad
Philosophers, your atheistic priests,
Your consecrated murderers, horrible
And sexless harlots . . . under every mask
Of your abominable devil's dance
Last night, sir, I detected and I scorn'd
The face of every worn-out villany
And wither'd vice of the old world, smear'd o'er
With the coarse barbarous war-paint of the new.

I heard your new songs, and I recognized
In all the same old burden, "Blood and gold!"
"Rapine and wrong!" But you, sir, you yourself
I saw not. Why? Because you did not deign,
And rightly did not deign, sir, to descend
From where the folly of your worshippers
Above their heads, on your dishonest throne,
Hath raised you, back to your low native place
In the rank filth and ordure at their feet.
Because you, in your secret soul, despised
The dupes of your imposture. What remains?
But if one spark of man yet in thee burns,
Look on my face, Panurge,—'tis the face
Of one whom thou canst neither dupe nor daunt,
And not less thoroughly despise thyself
Than those whom thou despisest.

(*He seats himself, under the arms of his Family.*)

PANURGE (*musingly*).

True. My world
Is not yet in the actual developed.
'Tis but the rough sketch of the future time.
An infant giant . . . must be nurst and taught:
It grows apace—will grow up in good time
From cubhood into manhood. It hath need
Of nourishment—care—and it may be, too,
No gentle discipline. But mark me, Orval,
The time shall come when this brute world of mine
Will thoroughly acquire the consciousness
Of its existence as a fact in time
Indisputable: when it will cry out
"I AM!" and then in all the universe

Of Nature shall no other voice be left
To answer "I am too."

ORVAL.

Well, sir? and then?

PANURGE.

And then, Lord Orval, from the life in me
This night incarnate shall a race arise,
Such as the teeming earth has never yet
Rear'd from her fruitful bosom. Men as gods,
Knowing both good and evil: masters they
Both of themselves and of their home, this globe;
Which globe itself shall be to them one vast
Palace of Pleasure, by the Spirits of Art
And Science rear'd into the golden light
Of the glad time, a happy fabric fair
In the wide-porchèd doors of whose serene
Dominion shall the elements of earth
And heaven await the bidding of their lords!

ORVAL.

Thou liest, impostor! and thy strain'd voice fails
To hit the pitch of inspiration. Slave
Of Reason, she thou servest hath sealed up
The springs of prophecy and oracle.

PANURGE.

Man, interrupt me not! Millions of hearts
Have hunger'd for this prophecy, vouchsafed
To thee alone. I tell thee, in that time,
Mankind shall commune with a god—a god
Unlike to thine—incapable of death—

Wrench'd from the bosom of the vast unknown
By the strong toil and trouble infinite
Of centuries of unappeased desire.
From his long hiding-place in heaven at last
Torn down and welcomed to this world of theirs
By his stout human children, in the day
When man shall have attain'd the age at which
Knowledge of Truth is man's inheritance.
Then shall Humanity both save itself
And save its God.

ORVAL.

Blasphemer, centuries
Have flow'd already from the fount of time,
Since when the God, of whom thou feelest now
The inevitable necessity, revealed
Himself to those who, of his earthly sons,
Have eyes to see, or ears to hear. And ere
Thy birth was to the service of his foes
Permitted, by that God Humanity
Hath—even from thee—been saved.

PANURGE.

A brave god! Count
The nigh two thousand years of human pain
And degradation irremediable
Since—

ORVAL.

On the summit of the seven hills,
In the strong heart of sempiternal Rome,
Over the lost dominion of the Cæsars,

Above the ruin'd remnants of a power
More powerful than thine,—girt by fall'n gods
Nobler than those thou worshipest—fall'n gods
That dared not lift up from the dust of time
Their hopeless heads, to gaze upon the feet
Of their excruciated Conqueror—there,
Once—in the morning of my life—I saw
That Cross, and Him that hung thereon, with arms
Outstretcht to east and west in the embrace
Of infinite benediction!

PANURGE.

Bah! the old
Old nursery doggrel, the long lullaby
With which how many periwigg'd and powder'd
Respectable old women have for years
Been getting off to sleep that overgrown
Big baby the Fool-People! Shake this heap
Of rusty iron, and methinks 'twill sound
A truer note.

(*Strikes the armour.*)

But thou? I read thy heart.
What faith is *there* is of a nobler kind.
Listen to me, Lord Orval. If thy soul
Hath ever loved Truth better than all creeds
That seek to cramp and cannot even clasp her;
If thou hast ever follow'd her fair steps
Beyond the bounds of Use and Wont—beyond
The perishable aims that tie small minds
To small successes; if thou hast ever felt
Thyself to be of God created, in
The image of Humanity, God's Son,

Rather than of blind Chance in the mere form
Of a three-hundred-years-old Noble; if
Thou seest, across the universe of deeds,
Beyond the few poor earthy inches spann'd
By the brief shadow of thyself, the vast
Capacities of Nature's wondrous gift,
A human life; and, seeing this, dost prize
The gift, for man's sake—not thine own;—then heed
The voice that now perchance for the last time,
At the last hour, is speaking. Orval, rise!
Rise, soul and heart of Nature's nobleman,
Far nobler in thy manly right *to be*,
Than in whatever title to the name
Of meaner men ignoble Custom grants!
Rise, and consider, for man's sake, with me
What shall be done to help him.

ORVAL (*in great agitation*).

Tempter! Son
Of the old Serpent! . . But no. These are dreams.
The first man perish'd in the wilderness
Among the brutes: and their lost Paradise
Men may not now recapture.

PANURGE.

(Ha? have I hit
At last the weak spot in Pride's buckler! Fool
Not to have seen this sooner? He is troubled.
Have I, by a mere blunder, toucht at last,
The sensitive nerve of poesy—the chord
That sounds in golden unison with hope
To the man's inmost heart? *Victoria!*)

ORVAL.

I too have dream'd . . . Ah, if my blood, even yet,
Could purchase . . if my head . . . man, you should have it!
But no, the days are past. It is too late.

PANURGE.

Listen! We cannot put back time. The dead
Their dead must bury. Think! A leech forbids
His patient to take any exercise:
Warns him that movement may to life be fatal.
The patient disobeys, and walks a mile.
What think you of that leech, if, to repair
The mischief done, he make his patient walk
The whole mile *back?* The People's sick, my lord,
Your friends forbade it stir. But it *does* stir:
Moves forward somehow. And its doctors now,
Who had forbidden it to move at all,
Insist upon its moving back again.
Is motion backward less injurious
Than motion forward?*

ORVAL.

Grant your simile.
Forward . . to what?

PANURGE.

Ay, there's the point to which
I sought to bring this talk. When two wise men
Discuss dispassionately such a point
They cannot fail to agree upon it.

* An anachronism of Panurge's. I think that Börne has said this, or something like it. O. M.

ORVAL.

Well?

PANURGE.

I take it there's no grounded difference
Between, what on the surface seem opposed,
Our real opinions.

ORVAL.

Sir, proceed.

PANURGE.

I will.
The point. What kind of Government is best?
Government by the best.

ORVAL.

But who are they?

PANURGE.

The real *aristoi:* the most capable
Of governing: the wise men: I and thou.

ORVAL.

And, sir, if you and I be knaves, being wise,
What power is it likely we shall leave
To that most dangerous class—the honest men?

PANURGE.

If all start fair, the power a man attains
Is proof of his capacity for power.
And never in the history of mankind
Was such a field for power as I have clear'd.
Think! is it nothing to have swept away

Parliament, Church, and Aristocracy?
All's even now. And o'er the level waste
What rises but supreme necessity
For the superior mind and stronger hand?
For men must still be govern'd.

ORVAL.

You grant that?

PANURGE.

Of course. And govern'd by the best, I say.

ORVAL.

So the old obsolete, much abused device
Of Aristocracy has yet some part
To play in the new system?

PANURGE.

Yes, renew'd
Itself, though, in the person of its new
And better representatives.

ORVAL.

Of course.
But what becomes then of Equality?

PANURGE.

Think not that I suppose any one man
Is worth as much as any other man.
No fool am I. The wise and noble-minded
Are worth more than the ignorant and base.
Equality means equal start for all;
Not equal prizes for the swift and slow.
The true great men should get the true great power.

ORVAL.

Yes. But great men, sir, are a kind of fruit
That does not grow on every common tree.
God grants them to us rarely. When they come,
They come to power in their own great way,
Do what we will, by nature's force in them;
And when they come not, there's no kind of care
Or forcing culture can from sapless stocks
Make such fruits grow. Sir, no philosophy,
If nature makes but little men, can turn
Those little men to great men—'tis to save
The little men from being slaves and tools
Not to true great men, but untrue great rogues,
Which little men for great men oft mistake,
That the Philosophy of Government
Should be applied. Science? what need of that,
To know a giant when he strides in view?
Or move on swiftly, mounted on his back?
Or trample monsters vanquisht by his club?
But if the race of giants be extinct,
As travellers tell, till giants grow again,
Let Science help us to make seven-league boots,
And clubs mechanical that, fitly plied,
May in a dwarf's hand deal a giant's blow,
Skill eking out the thrift of force. This Church,
This Parliament, this Aristocracy,
Contrivances which Science had devised
To do the business of society,
You have abolish'd . . . what! in the wild wish
That some great man, who has not yet appear'd,
Should, when he comes, if he should ever come,

Find round him ample room in which to try
His hand at renovating ruin? Sir,
Call you this prospect progress? You put back
The world, not forward; leaving all to Chance,
The blind brute-headed, unintelligent god,
Placed on his old barbarian throne again.
Sir, better to my thinking, a bad King
Check'd by a not much better Parliament,
A loose Nobility, and a lazy Church,
Than such an absolute Chaos as you make,
With no more hopeful prospect in reserve
Than ultimate Order in that worst of shapes,
A single-handed Despotism, crown'd
And robed i' the name of wrong'd Democracy.

PANURGE.

Not Despotism, if the canvass'd choice
Of the free Many crown the chosen One.

ORVAL.

Whom having crown'd, if the free Many then
Should, being human, haply change its mind,
Repent its choice, and wish the chosen One
A chosen Other, shall this most free Many
Be free to uncrown, as 'twas free to crown?
Is the free Many free to change as choose?
If so, then where is your stability?
If only free to give, but, having given,
Not free to take again its gift abused,
Where is your liberty?

PANURGE.

We cannot quite
Leave time out of the account. Men must improve

Ere things can be improved. But one wise man,
Wielding the power which many thousand fools
May in a lucky moment be induced
To delegate to him on their behalf,
Can in a year improve things, more than they
Can in a century improve themselves.
I say, Make way for the strong men.

ORVAL.

And I,
Leave room, sir, for the weak. They have God's leave
To live as well as we. Alas, Panurge,
Do we not strangely seem to have changed parts?
For you, my Citizen Guest, have all this while
Been speaking for Aristocratic Rights;
For Popular Privileges, I. 'Tis there
The hopelessness, the misery of it all!
Ages,—perchance a hundred years ago—
That might have then been possible, which now
Our fates forbid, and we made common cause
Who now must be no common foes. Too late!
We can no longer understand each other,
Never forgive each other for the past.
The hour hath struck for both: and both must fight,
And one must fall. Nature and time, in strange
Conspiracy, have made us enemies
Beyond all reconcilement. Now farewell,
My Citizen Guest. 'Tis time that we should part.
My vassals shall conduct thee to thy friends.

PANURGE.

Farewell, Lord Orval! Till we meet once more

On the storm'd ramparts. Then, when thou hast left
Nor ball nor powder . . .

ORVAL.

We will *then* cross swords, sir.
Ho, Herman! Andrew!
(*Enter Andrew and Herman.*)

PANURGE.

Madman! Be it so.
I am sad. I would have saved thee. Thou and I
Are eagles of one feather. But the bolt
Of heaven hath on thine eirie fall'n. Behold,
In yonder purple Oriel, while we speak,
The sun is rising. To the sun I soar.
Adieu!

ORVAL.

Adieu, sir! Andrew, from these halls
Safe to the outposts of our enemy
Escort our guest. Adieu.
(*Exit Panurge, escorted by Andrew and Herman. Orval remains lost in thought: then with a heavy sigh,*)
The spurring hour
Posts to the bourne. And this fool, life, at last,
Chasing the future, falls into the past.

END OF THE FOURTH EPOCH.

FIFTH EPOCH.

MAN AND FATE.

FIFTH EPOCH.

SCENE I.—*Early morning. Interior of the fortress-chapel of St. John. Lofty columns, with niches, supporting the nave, on either side. In each niche is an armed statue: and the Senators and chief Ecclesiastical Dignitaries are seated, one under every statue, in their robes of state, to left and right. Behind them, through the spaces between the columns, the rest of the Nobility, armed and in dense masses, is visible. In the background, by the main altar, the Archbishop is seated in a splendid chair, gorgeously clad, and having across his knees an antique sword. Behind and around the altar is grouped the rest of the Priesthood.* ORVAL, *bareheaded, kneeling before the altar with a banner in his hand. Organ music.*

HYMN.

IN the last of Thy churches, here,
Of Thy servants the last, do we
O God of our fathers, revere
Thy name; and we call upon Thee.
For have we not heard with our ears,
And have not our fathers told
What was done in the former years,
The great deeds of the days of old?
How the heathen Thy hand hath driven,
When it planted Thy people in:
How the nations Thy wrath hath riven,
When it cast them out in their sin.

In Thy name hath the refuge been
Of our sires, in the old generations;
And or ever the hills were seen
Didst Thou stablish the world's foundations.
Therefore tremble we not, neither fear,
Though the earth be removèd and flee,
And the hills from their place disappear
And be sunk in the midst of the sea.
In Thy name have we bended the bow,
In Thy name we have girded the sword,
In Thy name shall we overthrow,
And scatter our enemies, Lord.
But, O wherefore yet sleepest Thou?
And O be Thou not absent for ever!
Hide, O hide not Thy face from us now,
But arise, O Lord, and deliver!

A NOBLE IN THE CROWD.

Mark him! Not Lucifer, ere Heaven he lost
Could have look'd haughtier.

A SECOND.

Nor young Alexander
When he had conquer'd what, for all he boasts,
Lord Orval hath not conquer'd yet—the world.

A THIRD.

Ay. And what hath he done, this mimic Mars,
To justify the godship he puts on
So proudly?

THE FIRST.

Nothing.

THE SECOND.

For ten foemen fallen
Beneath his sword, a hundred of his own
Have been most rashly wasted.

(*Organ ceases.*)

FIRST.

Hist! the choice
Of this man to the undeserved command
Of us, men noble as himself—nay, nobler,
Is what . . .

SECOND.

Behoves us to prevent.

FIRST.

My thought.

THIRD.

And mine.

ORVAL.

Here on Thine altar, Lord of Hosts,
That didst to me, Thy faithful soldier, grant
The strength to take it, kneeling, I lay down
This banner, pluckt in battle from Thy foes.

ARCHBISHOP.

Servant of God, receive this sacred sword
Which Bouillon's noble Chief in Holy Land
Made famous.

VOICES.

Hail to Orval! Orval, hail!

ARCHBISHOP.

Next, with the benediction of these hands,
And by the general suffrage of thy peers,
Receive of all our armies, and of this
Renown'd and ancient citadel,—the last
Whence floats our ensign,—the supreme command:
Whom, in the name of all, I now proclaim
General-in-chief.

VOICES.

Hail, Orval!

A VOICE IN THE CROWD.

I protest.

OMNES.

Silence! away with him! Hail, Orval! hail!

ORVAL.

Friends, Fellow-soldiers, Princes, Senators,
If there be any one among you all
That can against mine honest name advance
Aught to disgrace the choice wherewith you grace it,
Let him stand forth, and look me in the face,
And, like a noble gentleman, lay bare
His purpose and his sword.

(*Silence.*)

ARCHBISHOP.

No voice disputes
Thy well-won title.

OMNES.

Hail, Lord Orval! hail!

ORVAL.

You do accept me for your leader, then?

OMNES.

We do! we do!

ORVAL.

I cannot promise you
That I will lead you all to victory:
Ask that of God: but I do pledge myself
To lead you all to glory.

OMNES.

Hail!

ORVAL.

Swear all,
Each on his own good sword, as thus swear I
On noble Godfrey's saintly brand, to Heaven
That hears, and our own hearts, brave gentlemen,
That, long as in our knightly hands be life,
Blood in our veins, or in our bodies breath,
We will not yield up our fair fathers' faith,
The names they won us, or the lands they left;
So swear to live, and so to die at last,
Dying unshamed, when He that gave us life
His gift recalls,—of hunger, if He will,
Hot thirst, or else what honourable men,
Losing all else save honour's self, may win,
Wounds that grace noble life with noble death;
Bequeathing, if nought else, their fathers' fame
Fair to our sons—no heritage of shame!

OMNES.

We swear! we swear!

(*The Archbishop raises the cross over the altar, all draw their swords and kneel.*)

O Lord our God,
Smite with Thine avenging rod,
Him that sweareth, if he be
To his oath forsworn, and Thee!
By the righteous wrath of Heaven
Perish,—if in heart of craven,
Head of traitor, soul of spy,—
Treason, fear, and perjury!

HYMN (*with organ music as the scene closes*).

The Lord is King: and hath put on
Glorious apparelling.
Earth the footstool, Heaven the throne,
Of the Lord, our God and King!
Let God arise, and scatter'd be
All His enemies! and they
That hate Him shall before Him flee,
As smoke that vanisheth away.
Lord, we call Thee from the deep.
Hear our cry, consider well!
Shall He slumber, shall He sleep,
He that watcheth Israel?

SCENE II.—*Afternoon. Platform on the ramparts.*

VOICES WITHOUT.

Way for the wounded!

(*The wounded are carried across the stage. Nobles entering in disorder.*)

A COUNT.

Who will surgeon me
This gash? I bleed to death. Chirurgeon ho!
Where's Orval?

A BARON.

Orval? When I saw him last
He was surrounded by our swarming foe,
But fighting still. No lion fiercer.

A PRINCE.

Well,
It was a desperate sortie.

THE COUNT.

Desperate? ay,
They shambled us like sheep.

THE BARON.

All's lost!

ORVAL (*entering, followed by Andrew and vassals*).

Lost? ha!
Who said then "All is lost"? What man of you,
That in his heart hath manhood left and life,

Dare say "All's lost"?

THE PRINCE.

What, Orval? never more
I thought to see thee amongst living men.
Welcome, brave chief! We bleed at every pore.
What's left of us? How long can we hold out?

ORVAL.

So long as we are living men: no longer.

THE BARON.

Count, you have seen that cruel man. How say you,
If we should fall into his bloody hands,
Shall we find mercy?

ORVAL.

Mercy? ay, my lord!
Such shameful mercy as the hangman grants
The felon that he gibbets—a swift end.
Thy father would have scorn'd such mercy.

THE BARON.

Ah,
Then nothing's left but to defend ourselves
As best we may.

ORVAL.

And you, Prince? What say you?

THE PRINCE.

My lord, a word with you.
(*They walk apart.*)
All this is well
To put upon the crowd. But you and I

Know that we must capitulate. My lord,
After this day's disastrous end, to think
We can repulse the enemy is not
Courage, but madness.

ORVAL.

Hush! speak lower, Prince.

THE PRINCE.

Wherefore?

ORVAL.

'Twere pity if our friends should hear
From one whose name was honourable once
Words that dishonour it. (*Aloud.*) Remember, sirs,
That unto him who of surrender speaks
The punishment is death.

THE COUNT, THE BARON, AND THE PRINCE TOGETHER.

The punishment
Is death to him that of surrender speaks.

OMNES.

Ay, no surrender! Death, but no surrender!

(*They go out.*)

ORVAL.

Where is my son?

ANDREW.

In the north tower. He sits
All day upon the flinty step beneath
The iron door that on the dungeons opes,
Singing strange songs.

ORVAL.

The western bastion arm
More strongly. We are weakest on that side.
See that the wall be double mann'd: this night
They may attack us. Go, good Andrew, ere
The sun sinks from our western outlook mark
The enemy, and bring me word of him.

ANDREW.

God help us! O my lord, our soldiers faint.
They are o'erwatch'd.

ORVAL.

There is no lack of wine
For princely tables in our cellars stored.
Broach them the best.

ANDREW.

I will, my lord.

ORVAL.

See to it.
(*Exit Andrew.*)

(*Orval ascends the ramparts, and eyes the plain from beside the standard of St. John, which is planted on the ramparts.*)

Yonder, from his red ramparts of the west,
Into his black and cloudy coffin, sinks
The bloody sun. And yonder spreads the foe.
My day is setting. And, like thee, O sun,
I to a gory grave am going down.
I too, like thee, have travell'd the world round.

Bright be mine end as thine! When we are gone
What shall come after? On what world not ours
Still wilt thou shine, and we, thy peers, be dust,
Who, whiles we yet were living souls, to thee
No homage owed! The days are few and fast.
And soon I,—they,—all these, that keep the forms
And semblances of men, shall be dead clay.
What matter, if, while yet we are, we are
Immortal in the moment we make ours?
O solitude of sovereignty! which they
That creep, and they that soar, aspire to reach,
By no base crawling guile, nor no blind flight,
But with the firm-set footsteps of a man
Whose vision measures what his manful will
Hath made the pathway of his purposes,
I have attain'd to be this day supreme
And paramount arbiter of those that were
My seeming equals yesterday. Content!
My days haste from me, but I grasp *myself*.
O such as never in the time gone by
I was, when through the dark of dreamless nights
I watch'd the rising of thy nebulous star,
Thou phantom Poësy, am I, who now
Hail life's bright burning brief Reality!
What if my days be number'd, being cramm'd
With numberless delights? And we will cheat
The chary time with memorable deeds
That shall outlive him, and whiles yet he lives
Feed him on passionatest pleasures. War,
Thou grand begetter of immortal men,
Make thou this lean life big with burly lust
Of glory, and fame gotten with a gust!

SCENE III.—*Night. A Chamber in the Fortress, in the wall of which is an iron door. Muriel is seated on the step of the door. Another door leading to the ramparts.*

ORVAL (*entering from the second door*).

A hundred men fresh-breathed to the redoubt!
After the battle they that fought must rest.
See the south battery arm'd.

A VOICE BEHIND THE DOOR.

God help us all!

ORVAL (*laying down his arms*).

Dear Muriel, thou hast heard the barking mouths
Of our artillery. But fear not, son!
Our walls are stout. 'Tis not to-night, nor yet
To-morrow, they will fall.

MURIEL.

Yes. I have heard
The cannon, Father; but I mind it not.
I have had other cause of fear.

ORVAL.

For me, lad?

MURIEL.

No. For I know thine hour is not yet come.

ORVAL.

Mine hour! Ay, truce to care! My heart to-night
Is light and vacant. If the raven croaks,
'Tis o'er the corpses of our enemies

Which we have left to feed him in the glen.
I am all thine. Tell me thy pretty thoughts, lad,
And I will hear thee as in the old time
In our old home.

MURIEL.

Follow me, Father.

ORVAL.

Whither?

MURIEL (*opening the iron door*).

Down to the Dread Tribunal.

ORVAL.

How, boy? Who
Hath taught thee to undo this iron door?
Hold, Muriel! hold! this gloomy stair leads down
Only to dismal subterranean dens
Where rot the bones of long-forgotten men.

MURIEL.

Ay, Father. There, where thine imperial eye
No ray in the eternal midnight finds
To guide thy steps, my spirit its path discerns.
Follow. The darkness to the darkness goes.

(*He descends. Orval snatches up the lamp, and follows*).

SCENE IV.—*Vast subterranean dungeons hewn in the rock, and strewn with rusty chains, bones, and old instruments of torture. Cells in various directions barred with iron gratings. The obscurity is feebly lighted by the lamp which* ORVAL *holds at the foot of a huge rocky stone; on the top of which* MURIEL *is standing, in a listening attitude.*

ORVAL.

Son! son!

MURIEL.

Hush, Father! hush!

ORVAL.

Come back! come back!

MURIEL.

Dost thou not hear their voices?

ORVAL.

Nothing, boy,
But the eternal silence of the tomb.

MURIEL.

Dost thou not see their forms?

ORVAL.

I can perceive
Only the giant shadows to whose shapes
This wavering flame uncertain motion lends.

MURIEL.

I see them. They approach. One after one
Forth troop they from their gloomy dens, and sit
In dismal synod yonder.

ORVAL.

Wretched boy,
The night-damp's giddy cold doth fever thee!
Boy, wilt thou rob me of the little strength
That's left me, who now need so much? so much!

MURIEL.

I see them, Father . . . pale and fearful forms
Dim-garmented, with solemn faces stern,

Assembling to the dreadful Judgment Seat;
Whereto they summon . . . ah, he comes, The Accused!

ORVAL.

Muriel!

MURIEL.

Dost thou hear them?

ORVAL.

Muriel!

VOICES (*faintly, out of the far darkness*).

By the rights that from wrongs we have wrung,
By the power that on pain hath been nurtured,
We,—who were strangled and hung,
We,—who were fetter'd and tortured,
Limbs that were gall'd by the gyve,
Flesh that was burn'd in the fire,
Bodies once buried alive
In the midnight and mire,
We arise in the fulness of time:
And, for robes, in our wrongs we array us,
Who are judges at last of the crime
Which the sons for the fathers must pay us.
For the guilty too late is repentance
Now that we, who were victims, are fates:
And Satan our terrible sentence
To execute waits.

ORVAL.

What seest thou, Muriel?

MURIEL.

The Accused! the Accused!

ORVAL.

Who is he?

MURIEL.

Father! Father, 'tis *thyself!*

ORVAL.

O boy! O son! Must *thou* my doomsman be?

THE VOICES (*growing louder*).

Son of a race accurst, in thee
All its crimes completed be:
All its powers united, all
Its grandeurs, grandest in thy fall:
All the passions, all the pride
Which the dead Past deified!
Of thy race the last, yet first,
Thou the greatest, thou the worst,
Highest crown'd, and deepest curst!
Fated son of fatal sires,
In whose glory flash their fires
Brightest as the flame expires!

ORVAL.

What hearest thou? what art thou gazing at?
Muriel, I charge thee, come! Unman me not.

A VOICE IN THE DARKNESS.

Because thou never hast loved aught, nor ever
Hast aught adored save thine own self, O soul,
Therefore the face of God shalt thou see never.
Evil thy course, Damnation be thy goal!

ORVAL.

Son, I see nothing. But methinks I hear
From underground, and in the gloomy air
Above me, mutterings, menaces, and moans.

MURIEL.

But HE now lifts his head, haughty as thine
When thou art anger'd, Father, and responds
To the dread shadows that do challenge him,
With resolute defiance, even as thou
When those whom thou despisest are not weak.

THE VOICES.

As we, in our wretchedness, wretchedly thou
Shalt perish unburied, unblest, unknown,
And never a tomb upon earth shall show
If the dust beneath it were once thine own.
None shall weep for thee: none shall pray for thee:
Never a parting psalm be sung,
Never a priest shall point death's way for thee,
Never a passing bell be rung.
Swift and sudden thine end shall be,
And bloody and bitter as ours hath been.
With the selfsame chain
To this rock of pain,
Yet black with the blood we have bled in vain,
As thy fathers bound us, do we bind thee,
To bleed unpitied and die unseen!

ORVAL.

At last I see, and know, ye, Spirits damn'd!

MURIEL.

Father, advance not! In the name of Christ
I do beseech thee, Father!

ORVAL.

Muriel,
What seest thou yet?

MURIEL.

A form.

ORVAL.

Whose form?

MURIEL.

Thine own.
Thy second self—thine image—ghastly pale—
Chain'd—and they torture it. I hear it groan.
Forgive me, Father, but . . .

ORVAL.

My son!

MURIEL.

This night
My Mother came, and charged me . . .
(*He swoons, and falls.*)

ORVAL.

Nothing else
Was wanting. To the threshold of Hell's Hall
Mine own son drags me. O Veronica,
Implacable Spirit! and Thou, God, to Whom
I have so oft, and so intensely, pray'd,

Is all in vain? Away! down here i' the dark
The shadows overcome me. Up! away!
Back to the light! Where I have yet to combat
With living men. When I have lost or won
That combat, let what else remains begin:
Eternal memory, and eternal pain!

(*Exit, bearing Muriel in his arms.*)

THE VOICES (*fainting away.*)

Because thou never hast loved aught, nor ever
Hast aught adored, but thine own self, O soul,
Therefore shalt thou the face of God see never.
Evil thy course, Damnation be thy goal!

SCENE V.—*Interior Court of the Fortress, crowded with the besieged nobles; old men, women, and children in various attitudes of distress.* ORVAL *in the midst, his arms folded. In front, the envoy of Panurge* (*an old noble and kinsman to Orval*). *Cries and confusion in the doors.*

ORVAL.

No. By my son's life, by my dead wife, no!

THE WOMEN.

Pity!

ORVAL.

No Pity. Providence to us
Grants but the last grand general pity—death.

THE WOMEN.

Not here! not here! better the hangman's hands.
We die of fever and of famine here.
Our babes are corpses at our milkless breasts.

THE MEN.

'Sdeath! but we'll hear this honourable man.
Send him not back unheard. We'll hear the Envoy.
He comes commission'd from Panurge's self
To bring us terms. We'll hear him. Speak, old man!

THE KINSMAN.

Good citizen was I my whole life long.
Good citizen and honest is my heart.
If I have undertaken to come here,
Graced with the confidence of that great man
Who is the People's Representative,
It is because I understand my age,
And recognize its glorious mission.

ORVAL.

Back
Unworthy and ridiculous old man!
Hide those grey hairs for shame, ere I forget
The weakness they should honour.
(Andrew, hark!
Prithee, good knave, find Herman. Bid him haste
With all our spears to join us here. Be swift.)
(*Exit Andrew.*)

A COUNT.

Orval, thy madness throws us all away.

OTHER NOBLES.

Are we his vassals? 'Sdeath, he shall find out
What we are made of! We'll no more obey him.

THE PRINCE.

This honest Envoy, this good nobleman,

Brings us, I doubt not, honourable terms.
Behoves us hear them in our own behalf.

THE OTHERS.

Keeping our lives, we'll yield the citadel.

THE ENVOY.

The great man who hath sent me grants your lives
To all of you, upon the just condition
That you henceforth become good citizens,
And recognize the age in which it is
Our glorious privilege to live.

OMNES.

Well spoken!
We recognize the age in which it is
Our glorious privilege to live. We wish
To be henceforth good citizens.

ORVAL.

Curs! hounds!
My very noble, somewhat foolish, most
Forgetful friends, methinks before you were
Good citizens you swore a certain oath
As loyal noble men to die with me
Rather than yield, save with your valued lives,
One inch of these old walls. That oath be sure
I shall not break,—nor you! Good citizens,
I mean to make you die like men, although
I cannot make you live like gentlemen.
Aha, you love your lives? you wish to be
Good citizens? you recognize (pray how?)
The glorious age in which you have found out

It is a privilege to live? Then ask
Your fathers why they taught you to oppress
And to despise all sons of Adam born
Ungraced by what the despicable lives
You care to keep have to disgraces turn'd,
Your most dishonoured titles?
You, Sir Count,
Ask your half-starved, emancipated serfs
How you have recognized this glorious age
In which it is your privilege to live.
And you, sir? Life's a privilege, no doubt.
But how have you employ'd it? Playing cards,
Corrupting women, in soft foreign lands
Squandering the misused revenues your hard
And grasping bailiffs wrung from the sore toil
Of miserable peasants in your own,
To pay your joyless orgies?
You, my lord,
You also recognize this glorious age;
In which your special privilege, we know,
Hath ever been to fawn upon the strong
And trample on the weak.
What, Lady! you too?
Last of how many other loves, not all
Quite glorious, do you love this glorious age?
It was *your* privilege—but have you used it?—
To teach your children to be brave and true,
High-minded, pure,—and so add honest men
To this most honest world in which it is
Our privilege to live.
O you great gods!
Must men be turn'd to worms before they die?

Death is before us: but, like soldiers, march
With me to find it in a soldier's grave,
And not, as felons, where the hangman waits
To trim the gallows.

NOBLES (*whispering to each other*).

How can we rely
Upon the promise of this renegade?
He brings no written word. Report avers,
Panurge never spares when he can smite.

OTHERS.

Ay, that's to pause at. Once in those red hands,
Who knows what worse than death may be our doom?

OTHERS.

Dead men, though, are we now. In all our stores
There's not a crumb of bread left.

THE WOMEN.

Men, have mercy
On us, and on your children! Must we starve?
Yonder there's bread enough to feed our slaves
Till they be fat. And here we die by inches.

THE MEN.

We'll hear the Envoy further.

OTHERS.

No, at once
Surrender. There's no holding out.

OTHERS.

Surrender!
Surrender! we waste time.

THE ENVOY.

I promise you,
As I have said, your liberties and lives
If you surrender. Pleading for your sakes
Who, though unwise, I yet will hope, my friends,
This much have I obtain'd of that great man
Who with his confidence hath honoured me.

ORVAL.

Hence, hound! or plead for thine own life.
(*Andrew and Herman enter, with troops.*)
Ho, comrades!
Miss not your mark . . . yon Cap of Liberty,
The terror of its worthy wearer, now
Sets shaking on his foolish forehead. Aim!
(*The Envoy runs off.*)

ORVAL.

Find, bind, and to his master send him back.
A moment, gentlemen!—I have a word
To say to some old friends here.
(*Addressing his soldiers in turn.*)
Luke, thy hand!
It is not easy to forget thy face
While yet it keeps that scar: and I remember
No huntsman ever handled hunting spear
As thou with that left hand of thine. Ah, Luke,
The boars had a bad time of it when we
Were somewhat younger. And hast thou forgotten
That day I saved thee from a broken neck
On the Black Mountain, when we could not find
The izard we had shot?

And you, old friends;
Faith, 'twas a lucky chance that fired your farms,
For we rebuilt them better. Eh?
And you,
Do you remember when to our domains,
Flying from your bad lord, you came by night?
I think you lack'd not shelter, aid, and food,
Till we found land to build you houses on,
And fields for your own tillage.
Well, the times
Are changed since then: and may be you are changed,
As others are. The ground I go to win
Is scant, and only wide enough to hold
One brave man's bones. Long have you follow'd me.
But now if you would follow me, old friends,
It must be to the grave. I counsel you
Rather to follow these most noble lords
Who love their lives, as doubtless you love yours,
And leave me here to die, a little wiser,
But not much sadder, friends, than I have lived.

SOLDIERS.

Long live our noble master! long live Orval!

ORVAL.

See that whatever rests of meat and wine
Be shared among our faithful soldiers, Herman.
Then to the ramparts! Friends, this braggart foe
Shall find there is some life left in us yet.

HERMAN.

Wine, boys, and meat! then to the ramparts, ho!

ANDREW.

The will of God be done! We are all dead men.

SOLDIERS.

God bless Lord Orval! Wine and meat, lads! Come!
(*Exeunt soldiers.*)

THE WOMEN.

Orval, we curse thee in our children's name!

CHILDREN.

God, curse this Orval, for our fathers' sake!

MEN.

For our wives' sake we curse thee, Orval!

ORVAL.

Curse
Yourselves for cowards. To the ramparts, ho!

SCENE VI.—*Ramparts of St John. Corpses, dismounted cannon, and broken arms scattered over the ground. Distant artillery and shouts of victory outside. Soldiers passing rapidly across the stage.* ORVAL *in the breach.* ANDREW *beside him.*

ORVAL (*sheathing his sword*).

To conquer danger is to conquer fate.
We have repulsed them.

ANDREW.

Our last cartridges
Have served us well. But they must rally soon.
And then . . . . There's not a pound of powder left
Among us all.

ORVAL.

What ! is all spent ?

ANDREW.

My lord,
No mortal man can conquer destiny.

ORVAL.

Bring my son to me, Andrew.

ANDREW.

Ay, my lord.

ORVAL (*looking over the wall*).

The smoke of battle hath obscured my sight.
The glen beneath me seems to swim and sink
In a great sea of blood, and yonder crags
To stagger like sick men. So much my thoughts
My senses have confounded.
(*Seats himself in the breach.*)
What avails
The short-lived angel of this little world,
Whose name is man, to get himself call'd great,
If after a few years of noisy life
Into the eternal silence he falls back ?
One should be God or nothing.
(*Andrew enters with Muriel.*)
Andrew, take
A dozen trusty men of mine own band;
Search every cellar, every vault explore,
And beat back to the ramparts and the walls
All those whom there methinks that thou shalt find
Skulking conceal'd.

ANDREW.

Even Princes, Counts, and Dukes?

ORVAL.

All whom thou findest.

(*Exit Andrew.*)

Son, give me thy hand.
It is the last time that thy father's lips
May touch thy brow. 'Tis like thy mother's, boy.

MURIEL.

Father, before the trumpet call'd to arms,
I heard her voice.

ORVAL.

What said she?

MURIEL.

"Son, to-night
Thou shalt be with me."

ORVAL.

Nought of me?

MURIEL.

Nought else.
Only "Thou shalt be with me, son, to-night."

ORVAL.

Will my strength fail me here, at the last stage
Of life's disastrous journey? One step more.
Courage, tired heart! the grave is near.
My son,

We are about to part. I cannot tell
If we shall ever meet again.

MURIEL.

O Father,
Leave me not! We will go together.

ORVAL.

Child,
It may not be. Our ways are not the same.
Sad hath the life I gave thee been, my son,
But happiness awaits thee: and, among
Thy kindred cherubs, soon wilt thou forget
The earthly father thou shalt see no more.

MURIEL.

What are those cries? I tremble. Hark! they come,
O Father, and the bellowing cannon-mouths
Proclaim it . . . the *Last Hour* which was foretold!
(*The nobles in disorder are driven to the walls, pursued by Andrew and Herman. Firing and shouts without.*)

ORVAL.

On, Herman! On!

A VOICE IN THE CROWD.

You give us broken guns,
No powder and no ball, and bid us stand
Marks to be shot at!

OTHER VOICES.

'Sdeath! How can we keep
These shatter'd walls, unarm'd, half-starved? . . Back!
back!

OTHERS.

Back! Whither art thou driving us?

ORVAL (*with a terrible cry*).

To DEATH!

Son, son, one last embrace! Boy, in this kiss
Would that to thine I could unite my soul
For evermore! But I begin to see
The way that I am going. 'Tis not thine.
(*Muriel falls, struck by a ball, and dies.*)

VOICE IN THE AIR.

To me, my Son's pure Spirit!

ORVAL.

Dead? To me,
My peers in arms! Dead? And I loved him. Friends,
The foe is but a sword's length from us. Up,
And roll him from the ramparts!
(*The enemy begins to appear over the battlements.*)
Who's for Orval?
An Orval, ho! Down, Sons of Freedom! down,
And feed the other nobler birds of prey.
An Orval! ho, an Orval! Friends, have at them!
(*Exit, followed by all tumultuously.*)

SCENE VII.—*Another part of the platform.*

NOBLES (*rushing past in disorder*).

The Red Flag waves over the Western Fort.
Fly! they are on us.

FORCES OF THE ENEMY IN PURSUIT.

Freedom, and No Quarter!

THE ENVOY (*of Scene V.*)

That is the chief lieutenant of Lord Orval.
You know me, all, an honest citizen.
The scoundrel beat, and did misuse me vilely,
When for the People's Cause I pleaded here.
'Tis a blood-thirsty knave. I say, he beat me.
Down with him, honest citizens!

ANDREW.

Ha, fox!
The old dog hath a tooth left in his head.
(*Wounds the Envoy.*)

THE ENVOY.

The wretch will kill me. Help, good citizens!

CITIZENS.

That man shot Ralph. We saw him on the wall.
Down with the greybeard! Freedom, and No Quarter!
(*Fighting. Andrew falls. They pass on.*)

ORVAL (*entering, covered with blood, his sword drawn*).

This way they follow'd when those cowards fled.
Who's here? What, Andrew? Art thou down, old friend?
Thou bleedest?

ANDREW.

Ay, to death.

ORVAL.

O brave, and true!
O my old faithful servant!

ANDREW.

Let me be.
I am a dying man.

ORVAL.

I'll leave thee not.

ANDREW.

Go, get you gone. I am dying.

ORVAL.

All that's left
Of Orval, gallant soldier, I give thee
In these true tears. There's no one left on earth
To shed such tears for me.

ANDREW.

Then keep thy tears.

ORVAL.

I'll help thee hence.

ANDREW.

I am past help of all
Save the great God into whose hand I fall.
Look to thyself. There's that upon thy soul
I would not have on mine for all the glory
Of all the kingdoms of the world. (*Dies.*)

ORVAL (*flinging his sword over the wall*).

Away!

Go also thou, last trusty friend! No more
Shall Orval need thy service. We go hence
As naked as we came. Now nothing's left
Of Orval save himself. All mine are fall'n,
And those poor trembling wretches whom I ruled
Are kneeing their new master.
(*Looks round.*)
Here all's bare.
The foe returns not. We will rest awhile.
This is as good a height as any other
From which to look back on the broken world
Which I have thrown behind me, and consider
What sort of thing it was. Hark! now again
The cry comes this way. Ha! from the North Tower
The red flag flutters. 'Tis my name, they call.
The rabble shrieks for Orval. Bloodhounds base,
Have you no scent? Here is your noble quarry!
(*Shouting from the wall.*) Orval is here! Behold me.
I am Orval!
But ye are not my judges, wretched grains
Of most ignoble dust which the wild wind
Of aimless accident awhile blows up,
Nor yet my doomsmen. By no mortal hand
Dies Orval.
(*He mounts the wall, and gazes over the precipice beneath.*)
Earth, take back whate'er of thine
Held for awhile this yet unconquer'd Spirit,
Which now goes hence. All mine eternity
I see before me—black and terrible,
And, in the midst, God, like a sun that burns
For ever, lighting nothing. Farewell, world!
Receive me, thou, my native element,

Into whose vast and sombre depths, thus, thus,
With outstretcht arms and open'd spirit, I plunge!
(*He leaps from the wall, and disappears into the abyss beneath.*)

SCENE VIII.—*Interior Court of the Fortress. Flourish of Trumpets. The conquered Nobles, with their wives and children, are led in, chained. After them, Panurge, the Modern Brutus, General Castrocaro (see Epoch IV., Scene III.), and other Revolutionary Chiefs. With them, the Envoy.*

PANURGE (*addressing the prisoners*).

Thy name?

FIRST PRISONER.

Enulphus, Seignior of Beaurain.

PANURGE.

A name that shall be heard on earth no more.
Thine?

SECOND PRISONER.

Guy de Malpas, Lord of Montmirail.

PANURGE.

Thou hast pronounced it the last time. And thine?

THIRD PRISONER.

Pons, Prince of Arden.

PANURGE.

Thine?

FOURTH PRISONER.

John, Duke of Orm.

PANURGE.

Struck from the list of living men, John, Pons!

CASTROCARO.

These rascals have our forces held in check
Nigh four whole months: and you see here with what:
Some dozen guns, and obsolete parapets!

BRUTUS.

How many more of them remain?

PANURGE.

Oh, take them!
They are not worth our reckoning. Take them hence,
And make examples of them all . . . save one—
Whatever one of all of them can tell
Where we shall find this Orval.

SEVERAL VOICES.

When the trump
That call'd our troops in, sounded victory,
Sudden he disappear'd. Till then, we saw him
Here, there, and everywhere, from wall to wall.

THE ENVOY.

Citizen President, suffer me to speak
As intercessor for these prisoners' lives.
'Tis they, Great Citizen, that did erewhile
(Upon my urging what the love I bear
The People's Cause gave eloquence to urge)
Into my hands deliver up the keys
Of this strong place, where else we had not stood

Triumphant now. Which conduct, I opine,
Deserves the praise of all good citizens,
And proves they are good citizens themselves.

PANURGE.

Be silent, citizen! I recognize
No intercessor 'twixt mine own right hand
And my decrees. Thyself shall see them hang'd.
I charge thee with the expedition of it.

ENVOY.

Good citizen, my life long, have I been.
The proofs are patent. But I did not serve
The People's Cause to see my kinsmen kill'd
Like common felons . . .

PANURGE.

This old Doctrinaire
Is wearisome. Gag him, and hang him tight.
March. Where is Orval? Who can bring us to him?
A sack of gold for Orval dead or alive!
(*Enter a Lieutenant*).
What news? Hast thou seen Orval?

LIEUTENANT.

Citizen Chief,
By order of the General Castrocaro
I, with my men, the western ramparts storm'd.
There, as we enter'd, by the parapet
Of the third bastion, we beheld a man
Alone amid the dying and the dead.
"Seize him!" I cried. And at the word our troops
Had well nigh scaled the bastion, when the man

Sprang to the outer rock—there paused—and seem'd
With searching glance to sound the abyss beneath
him:
Then spread his arms, and, as a swimmer drops
Into the sea, he plunged. We saw no more:
But heard the body bound from stone to stone
Over the precipice. His sword we found
Under the parapet. Behold it here.

PANURGE.

There's blood upon the hilt, and on the blade
The arms of Orval graven. Well I know it.
He hath kept his word. Glory to him! To you
The gallows.
(*To Castrocaro.*) See them hung within an hour.
Then set about the raizing of this Fort.
Brutus!

(*Exeunt all but the Modern Brutus, who approaches Panurge. They seat themselves on the bastion.*)

BRUTUS.

Yon sun that now is setting fast
Shall rise to-morrow on an alter'd world!
Thou hast watch'd long, and needest rest. Dear
Master,
Incessant care hath stol'n a march on age,
And mark'd thy forehead first.

PANURGE.

The hour of rest
Is not for me, boy, yet. The last death-groan
Of my grand foe completes but half my task.

Nothing's done yet. All, all remains to do.
From Orval's death my life begins. Look forth.
See yonder plains whose dark immensity,
Beneath us, stretches 'twixt my thoughts and me;
The yet untraversed field of my designs!
Those smouldering homesteads must be palaces:
Those deserts we must people: pierce yon rocks:
With golden harvests clothe those arid tracts:
Dry up those marshes: plant yon barren heath:
Channel this valley, and that waste redeem,
Unite those lakes, and give to each his part
And profit of the soil our swords have won:
Until the living be the dead twice told
In number, and the new world's opulence
Outshine the old world's riches. Until then
We have not justified our first dread deed,
Destruction's drear necessity.

BRUTUS.

To achieve
Those giant tasks, the God of Liberty
Will give us strength.

PANURGE.

What say'st thou of a God?
Here, our foot slips in human blood. That blood
Was once a living thing, which thought, spake, acted.
What is it now? Behind me I can see
Nothing but these dismantled fortress walls;
Before me, nothing but yon wasted plain;
And yet I feel as though, besides us two,
SOME ONE were here.

BRUTUS.

Why here's what was, indeed,
Some one an hour ago, but nothing now.
See how his corpse is mangled!

PANURGE.

Not so much
But I can recognize his face. It was
Lord Orval's faithful servant. That man's name,
I think, was Andrew. But that man is dead,
And has no name now. Or, at least, no name
That we can guess. Yet there's a Spirit here,
A living Spirit (hath It any name?)
A dreadful Spirit of I know not Whom,
And know not What, seems hovering over us.
Mark, Brutus, yon black boulder jutting out
From the steep precipice. There's blood on it.
What if 'twere Orval's? There's no special hue
Of redness to distinguish one man's blood
From any other man's. Yet men's blood differs.
'Tis there he must have fallen.

BRUTUS.

O my Chief,
Why dost thou tremble?

PANURGE.

See'st thou yonder, boy?

BRUTUS.

Ay.

PANURGE.

What?

BRUTUS.

Why, nothing but the setting sun
Reddening the cloud on yonder mountain peak.
What's to be mark'd in that?

PANURGE.

A sign! a sign!
I know it. I have seen it in bad dreams.

BRUTUS.

Lean upon me. Thy face is white as death.

PANURGE.

Millions of men obey me. Multitudes,
Nations in arms. Where is my People?

BRUTUS.

Hark!
Their cry is yet upon the air beneath us.
Thy People call thee. In their name, and mine,
Pluck those changed eyes from yonder reddening rock!

PANURGE.

He stands there, still! Pierced with three nails, which are

Three stars. His arms are stretch'd across the world.
We cannot pass them.

BRUTUS.

Master, I see nothing.

Away! away!

PANURGE.

Vicisti, Galileë!

(*He dies.*)

* * *

END OF THE POEM.

IMITATIONS

AND

PARAPHRASES.

"Une langue à l'égard d'une autre est un chiffre où les mots sont changés en mots, et non les lettres en lettres."—PASCAL.

NONNOS.

EUROPA.

IMITATION.

(From the opening of the First Dionysiac.)

SING, O goddess, the thunder-breath, the bearer of lightening
From the luminous son of Kronos, the ardent heralding
Of a bright child-birth,—the glow of a nuptial glory, brightening
The fiery bridal chamber of burning Semele! Sing
The double birth of Bacchus, whom, moist from the midst o' the flame,
Zeus pluckt,—the unripe fruit of a motherhood half unblown:
Father and mother both was the god, by a twofold name,
To him, for whose sweet sake a masculine womb in his own
Self-wounded body he wrought; forgetting not how, of yore,
With the pang divine of another birth, parturient, he
Forth from out of his own bright swollen forehead bore
Full-arm'd the dazzling dread of Athenè issuing free.
Bring, O Muses, to me bring bacchanal wands, and smite

The shaken cymbals shrill, and fetch me the thyrsus spear,
Famed of divine Dionysos! And forthwith unto my sight,
As I mingle your dances among, may the multiform Proteus appear,
Leaving afar by the Pharos his favourite isle, and roll'd
In changes many as be these mystical songs of mine!
For, if like an orbèd dragon his trailing form he fold,
I will sing how, under the ivied spear, in a war divine
The turbulent giants were stricken, they and their dragon hair:
And if, as a bellowing lion, he toss his billowy mane,
Ye, as I sing, shall behold young Bacchus, my boy-god fair,
In the arms of Rhea, snatching the nipple her lion cubs drain:
But, if, in the midst of his manifold metamorphose, anon
Like a fretful leopard he leap, into praise my song shall roll,
Singing how over the gorgeous Ind rode the triumphing son
Of Zeus, when the pard and the elephant pull'd at his chariot pole:
Then, if he should fashion himself to the form of a tuskèd boar,
While he fashions himself, will I fashion my song till its strain be aglow
With the loves of the son of Thyone, and how he wedded of yore

Aura, the daughter of Cybele, Aura, the beautiful foe
Of the tusked boars, the mother of that third Bacchus to be:
And again, what time away in a wave of the water he glides,
With divine Dionysos my song shall be plunged in the unplumb'd sea,
As when, from the Thracian's assault, he fled under the nethermost tides:
But if, into the shape of a rustling tree, at the last, he shoot,
While his borrow'd branches murmur, my song shall be heard between,
Praising Icarios, lord of the winepress red when the foot,
With the foot competing, crushes the glad grape bunches green.
Bring to me, O Mimelones, the bacchanal wands, and cover
(Brightly replacing thus this common diurnal vest)
With the fair and spotted fawn skin, fragrantly sprinkled over
By odorous drops of the sweet Maronid nectar, my breast!
Keep ye for Menelaos,—led by Homeros, and her
Whose hidden dwelling is down in the depths of the hollow main,
Eidothea,—keep ye the coarse seal's coat of briny fur,
And bring me the cymbals and buckler. Not mine be the dulcet strain
Of the double-throated fife: lest Phœbos offended be.
For I know he is vext by each vivid pipe's importunate din

Since the challenge of Marsyas; when he in scorn up-
hung on a tree
The flesh of that felon flay'd, and made of it a puft
wine-skin,
To punish his insolent pipe, having peel'd the boaster
bare,
And left his bleeding limbs of their brown hide dis-
possest.
But thou, O goddess, begin! begin, and first declare
The story of Kadmos old, and all his wandering quest.

On the beach of Sidon now, bull-shaped, with an up-
thrust horn,
Zeus from alying throat had sent forth a lovesick lowing,
Softening an ardent eyeball; while, in light bonds up-
borne,
Round the white limbs of a woman infant Eros was
throwing
Intertwinèd hands. For to her his curvèd throat
The mariner bull bends low, down sinking a duteous
knee;
And, while o'er his glossy flank the girl's form seems
to float,
Bearing Europa, smoothly, silently, saileth he.
Out of the reach of the ripple, though faint with a
lovely fear,
She, unmoving, is moved: so, silently, seated high
On the back of a scaly triton, as she on her swimming
steer,
Thetis, and Aphroditè, and Galatèa go by.
Kyanochætes admires the cloven-footed swimmer:
Triton afar replies to the god's insidious lowing,

From his clearly-echoing conch: and, aghast, in the dim green glimmer,
Nereus to Doris turns with a pointed finger, showing
That ravisht maiden fair, that hornèd sailor divine,
Shapes of wonder and awe; for the girl's hand holds the horn
Of her breathing bark, like a helm, as he beats breast-deep the brine,
And the girl's eyes glance o'er the glooming wave with a gaze forlorn.
Desire her pilot is: and the crafty Boreas lifts
And puffs with an amorous breath her garment's floating fold;
Over her bounteous bosom his silken sail he shifts,
And wantons there at his own wild will like a lover bold.
So on a dolphin borne when haply a Nereïd glides
To visit her liquid realms light over the lullèd sea,
At the touch of her guiding hand her seaborn steed divides
With a foamy furrow the fields that his azure pasture be.
Eros, herdsman now for the nonce, with his bow's sharp hook,
Turn'd into a pastoral goad, the mild bull's shoulder smites:
Through Poseidon's liquid fallows while thus, with the shepherd crook
Of Kypris, he the hornèd spouse of Herè excites,
The pure and austere cheek of virgin Pallas (cold maid
That never a mother knew) is flusht with a scornful shame,
Beholding her mighty father, the son of Kronos, wade
In a watery furrow, led by a woman's finger, tame.

But the midsea wave and tide give way to the ardent
god;
For was it not down in the midsea deeps that the
globèd blue
With the birth of Aphroditè brighten'd and greaten'd
and glow'd?
And Europa leads and is led, and is captain and cargo
too.

VIRGIL.

THE BEES OF ARISTÆUS.

PARAPHRASE.

(*From the Fourth Georgic.*)

v. 317.

THE shepherd Aristæus, when his bees
Sickness (so runs the tale) or dearth destroy'd,
Along Peneian Tempe's flying, above
The sacred headspring rested sad, and thus,
With much-reproachful moan, his parent call'd:
"Mother Cyrene, who the gulfy deeps
Of this stream holdest! mother, if indeed
Thymbræan Apollo, as thou dost aver,
Be my begetter, why was I begot
To bear the grudge of most unfavouring fates,
Though from the gods' illustrious lineage sprung?
Or whither fleeted is thy sometime love
Of us, whom wherefore didst thou oft exhort
To hope the heaven itself? For now, behold,
Even the poor honour of this mortal life,
By me, endeavouring all things, barely wrung
From tilth and the hard tendance of the herd,
Thou being my mother, I must needs forego!

Haste, therefore, to make end! with thine own hand
Uproot my pleasant woodland places all,
Fall on my sheepfolds with unfriendly fire,
Burn up my barns, my crops exterminate,
And lay the tough axe to my tender vines,
If thou art weary of thy son's renown."

That sound, in halls beneath the waters high,
The mother heard. Around her sat the Nymphs,
Plucking Milesian wools of watchet hue:
Drymo, and Xantho, and Phyllodoce,
With sparkling tresses round their white necks pour'd;
Lègia, and Nisæa, and Thalìa,
And Spio, and Cymodoce; with whom
Maiden Cydippe, and Lycoria
O' the yellow hair, to whom were newly known
Lucina's earliest labours; Beroë,
And Clio, sister Oceanitides:
Each with gold fillet girt about the brows,
Each garb'd in skins gay-colour'd; and Ephyre,
Opis, and Asian Deiopeïa; and, all
Her darts at last laid by, swift Arethuse.

Among them Clymene the tale was telling
Of Vulcan's frustrate forethought, and the frauds
Of Mars, and his sweet thefts; and all the loves
Full-frequent of the gods, since Chaos was,
She number'd. Taken by whose song, the while
The listening Nymphs around their spindles whirl'd
The fluent threads, yet once again that moan
Of Aristæus struck his mother's ears;
And all those Nymphs upon their glassy seats
Were startled. Foremost of her sisters then,

Above the topmost wave her yellow head
Upheaving, Arethusa glanced around:
And, from aloof, "Not idly scared," she cried,
"Sister Cyrene, by such moan wert thou;
Whose chiefest care, sad Aristæus' self,
Stands by the wave of thy Peneian Sire
Weeping, and, by thy name, thee, cruel, calls."
To her the mother by new fear heart-struck,
"O hither bring him, bring him unto us!
To him," she cried, "the thresholds of the gods
It is vouchsafed to traverse." And forthwith
She bade the waters wide asunder shrink,
Wherethro' the youth might enter. The scoop'd wave
Even as a mountainous hollow, around him hung:
The abyss received him to its bosom vast,
And down beneath the river he was drawn.

There moves he, marvelling at his mother's home,
And her wet kingdoms: lakes in caverns lock'd,
And sounding groves: there, by the unwieldy toil
Of waters all bewilder'd, round he looks,
And in their places sees those rivers all
That wander underneath the massy earth:
Phasis, and Lycus, and the headspring high
Whence, first from under-ground, Enipeus bursts,
Whence Father Tiber, whence smooth Anio flows,
And roughly-sounding rocky Hypanis,
Mysian Caïcus, and, with double horn,
Golden bull-brow'd Eridanus, than whom
No river through rich-cultured lands goes down
More passionately into the purple sea.

Soon as her son was enter'd in, beneath

Her chamber's sparry-hanging roof, and there
Cyrene knew his woes, though vainly wept,
Not irremediable, in order round,
Her sisters all their liquid fountains pour
Upon his hands; and diapers they bear
Daintily woven. Part, the tables load
With viands, and full goblets range. Anon,
With fired Panchæan spice the altars glow.
And "Take we beakers of Mæonian wine,"
The mother cried, "And to Oceanus
"Libations pour!" So saying, herself the Sire
Of all things, Ocean, and her Sister Nymphs,
(The hundred woodland ministers, and they
That tend upon the streams, a hundred more)
Invoking, thrice with liquid nectar drench'd
The blazing altar. Thrice the quicken'd flame,
High as the roof-top leaping, flash'd. Then she,
By that fair omen fortified, began:

"There dwells in the Carpathian gulf a Sage
To Neptune dear; sea-colour'd Proteus. He
That wanders the wide water, charioted
By his two-footed steeds to fishes join'd,
Now to revisit his loved native land
Pallene, and the Emathian port, is gone.
Him, both we Nymphs revere, and Nereus' self,
Our Sire grandæval: for to him, as seer,
Be all things known, that are, or once have been,
Or in the far off time are yet to be.
So pleased it Neptune, whose unwieldy flocks,
Rank seals, he pastures underneath the gulf.
Him, son, behoves thee first to seize, and bind,

That he thy cause of mischief may declare,
And second the event. For counsel none
He unenforced vouchsafes: nor may'st thou him
Beseeching turn: on whom, when caught, hard force
And chains essay: round these, if thou persist,
His frustrate wiles shall waste themselves away.
Myself, what time the sun's mid-ardours burn,
When thirsty is the herb, and to the herd
Most pleasant every haunt of happy shade,
Thee to the hiding places will conduct
Wherein the old man, weary from the wave,
Betakes himself, whom there, in slumber sunk
Supine, thou may'st most easily assail.
Howbeit, when him thou holdest in thy hands
Fast bound, his various aspects, even then,
Shall fool thee with brute faces counterfeit:
For sudden shall he seem a bristly boar,
Fell tigress, dragon scaled, and lioness
With tawny mane; or, to escape his chains,
Give forth anon sharp sound of crackling flame,
Or, in thin waters falling, melt away.
But thou, the more he shift his shapes, so much
The more, son, tighten stern his stubborn bonds;
Till to the same his form returns, as when
With sleepy eyelids sunk thou saw'st him first.

So counsell'd she: and liquid odour pour'd
Ambrosial o'er her son, that all his frame
With fragrance flooded: on his curls composed
Came breathing gusts of sweet, and to his limbs
Light nimble health.

A hollow huge there is,

Deep-cavern'd in the side of a hoar crag,
Wherein the oft-wind-beaten wave o' the sea
Into long gorges breaks, and falls; erewhile
To storm-struck mariners a haven safe.
There Proteus, under the broad beetling cliff,
Houseth: and there, turn'd from the light o' the day,
The Nymph among the shadows placed the youth.
Herself, at hand, in vapour veil'd, retires.

By this, swift Sirius, scorching thirsty Ind,
Was hot in heaven: and now the fiery sun
His middle orbit had nigh fill'd: the grass
Was parching: and to muddy ooze the beams
Baked in their suck'd and shrunken river-beds
The tepid brooks; when from the sea-wave forth
Came Proteus, seeking his accustom'd cave.
Around him the vast deep's moist people play'd,
And, shambling, shook abroad the salt sea-spray.
Anon, to slumber, scatter'd here and there,
About the sea-beach, settled the sea-beasts.
Himself, meanwhile, as one that tends his herds
The hills among, what time the Even star
Back to their stalls his beeves from pasture bids,
And the lambs' bleating the wolf's hunger whets,
Above them, in the midst, upon a crag
Sat down considerate, and their number told.

Whom to assail soon as the chance he spied,
Scarce Aristæus the old man vouchsafed
Scant time to stretch at ease his wearied limbs,
But with alarum loud upon him rush'd,
Prone where he lay, and him fast manacled.

He, not unmindful of his art meanwhile,
Himself to all manner of marvellous shapes transform'd:
Fire, formidable beast, and flowing stream.
But, when by no false seeming might he 'scape,
Vanquisht, he turned anon into himself,
With human countenance resumed; and said:
"Rash boy, who bade thee our abodes approach?
Or here what seek'st thou?" But the other cried:
"Proteus, thou know'st: thyself, thou know'st: nor thee
May any man in aught deceive. Do thou
Therefore, thine own deceivings, prithee, cease.
Here, to the gods obedient, are we come,
Of our misfortunes to enquire the cause."
Thus far he spake: whereto in answer, shaked
By mighty spasms, the prophet around him roll'd
The glassy glare of his sea-colour'd eyes,
And grimly gnashing, thus the fates declared:

"Thee nothing less than wrath divine reproves.
Large debt thou owest of evil done: and worse
(If fates forbid not) hast deserved, than these
Retributive woes by wretched Orpheus waked,
Indignant raging for his ravisht spouse.
She headlong flying, headlong to her doom,
From thy pursuit the river-banks along,
Spurn'd with unheedful steps in the high reed
A hydra huge that by the rivage housed.
The hill-tops, then, with their lamentings loud,
In chorus, her companion Dryads fill'd:
Deep moan'd the Rhodopeian mountains: moan'd
Craggy Pangæa, and the region wild
Of Rhesus: moan'd those realms the Getomaær:

Hebrus: and where, from Athens, the North Wind
Bore ravisht Orithyia to his haunt.
But he, his heart's love-sickness solacing
To a hollow shell, the lonesome shores along,
Thee, at the dawning of the day, sweet wife,
Thee, at the darkening, solitary sung.

"Down, even, through the jaws of Tænarus, down
To the high doors of Dis, and that black grove,
With hideous darkness horrible, he went:
Down to the Manes, and their dreadful king,
And hearts to human prayers implacable.
Moved by his music from the nether seats
Of Erebus, lean shades and lightless shapes
Came flocking, thick as birds, at eventide,
In multitudes, that to the woodlands wing,
Or from the hills are driven by winter rains:
Matrons, and men, and bodies with no life
Of high-soul'd heroes, and unwedded maids,
Children, and youths upon the funeral pyre
Before the faces of their parents stretch'd:
Whom the slow ooze of that unlovely marsh
About Cocytus binds with sooty slime
And shapeless sedge, or ninefold Styx constrains.

"Amazement all the habitations husht
Of Tartarus, and the inmost depths of death,
And those cold tangled coils of livid snakes
Woven in the locks of the Eumenides:
Cerberus his three silenced jaws withheld
Wide gaping: and Ixion's orbèd wheel,
Still'd from the whirling of the wild wind, stood.

" Anon, returning, all those perils 'scaped,
With his restored Eurydice, what time
He reach'd the upper airs (behind him she:
For such command Proserpina imposed),
That lover rash his frenzied fancy seized;
Fault to forgive, if Death forgiveness knew!
Sudden he paused: and his Eurydice,
—His, now that day's true light is reach'd at last,
Unmindful, by his love, alas, o'ercome,
Turn'd to behold: thus all his labour lost:
Broken his pact with Death's unpardoning lord:
And thrice, from all his fens, Avernus shriek'd!

" ' Ah, what hath lost me, miserable,' she moan'd,
' Orpheus, and thee? what fatal frenzy this?
Me, hark! once more the cruel Fates recall,
And sleepy death my swimming sight obscures.
Farewell! For I fare hence, in the vast night
That gathers round me, and in vain to thee
Weak hands am waving; thine, alas, no more!'
Speaking, she faded sudden from his sight,
Like vapour mixt with unsubstantial air:
Nor him, yet yearning ah how much to say,
And shadows pale with frustrate passion clasping,
She any more beheld: for never more
The ferrymen of Orcus to o'erpass
The opposing deep permitted. What to do
Is left him? whither should he turn? to whom
Appeal, who mourns a now twice-ravisht spouse?
The Manes by what weeping, by what voice
Of wail may he the Nether Powers, appease?
She, cold, meanwhile, in Stygian bark is borne.

" Him, rumour'd tales report, for seven whole months
Continuous, weeping on a windy crag
Far off by Strymon's solitary wave:
Charm'd from their lairs by his melodious moan,
Came tigers, creeping under caverns cold,
Lull'd into languor; and the lured oak trees.
So Philomela in the poplar shade
Laments, bewailing her departed brood,
Whom, haply, passing, the hard ploughman spied,
And from the nest, yet callow, filch'd: but she
Mourns, brooding night by night upon the bough,
There pours and pours her miserable song
And with sad plainings fills the region round.

" No woman's beauty him, nor wedlock, soothed.
Lonely along the Hyperborean wilds
Of ice, and frosty Tanaïs, and the wolds
Unwidow'd ever of Rhipæan snows
Wandering, his lost Eurydice he wail'd,
And the vain gifts of Dis. Stung by his scorn *
The Thracian women, in the revels fierce
Of midnight Bacchus, and the season due
To rights divine, the youth asunder rent,
And wide upon the wilds his ruins strew'd.
Even then, tho' from the marble shoulders torn,
The while his head Œagrian Hebrus whirl'd
Down the mid-stream, still 'Ah Eurydice!'
'Hapless Eurydice!' from chilly lips
The voice call'd ever; and the parting soul

* " *Quo muncre*, &c." By which pious office of his rendered indignant, &c.

'Eurydice!' 'Eurydice!' the rocks
All down the stream re-echoed as it roll'd."
Thus Proteus: and adown the steep he sprang,
Plunged, and the bubbling billow above him whirl'd.
But not Cyrene. "Son," to him, o'erawed,
Returning lightly, "Put away," she said,
"Sad thoughts out of thy heart. Of thy mischance
This the sole cause. For this, unhappy boy,
The woodland Nymphs, with whom her wont it was
In the high groves to wake the choral dance,
Death on thy bees have sent. But, suppliant, thou
Bring offerings, and imploring peace, revere
The mild Napææ that to votive gifts,
In wrath relentful, light forgiveness grant.
The manner, first, of thy beseeching them
In order due will I declare. Four bulls
Well-chosen, and in shape surpassing all,
Of those, now thine, that on the summits feed
Of green Lycæus, and, by yoke untoucht,
Heifers as many more, do thou select:
Therewith, four altars to those goddesses,
In their high precincts, build: and from the throats
Of these let forth the sacred blood: and leave
The bodies of them in the leafy grove.
Then, when her rising the ninth dawn reveals,
Lethæan poppies to the nether ghost
Of Orpheus offer: and a heifer slay,
With a black sheep, appeased Eurydice
Revering thus: and to the grove return."

Nor linger'd he. But those maternal words
Duteous obey'd. Forth to the hallow'd groves

He went: and there the altars raised, and there
Four chosen bulls, in shape surpassing all,
And heifers by the yoke as yet untoucht
As many more, he led. Anon, what time,
This done, her rising the ninth dawn reveal'd,
Lethæan poppies to the nether ghost
Of Orpheus given, he to the grove return'd.
But there a wonder, sudden, and to tell
Surpassing strange, was witness'd. All about
Those bulls' half-molten entrails, and deep down
I' the heifer's womb, a sound of humming bees,
That, bubbling up from out the bursten ribs,
Swarm'd forth in clouds innumerable: and now
They fly together on the tall tree-tops,
And from the bended boughs in cluster hang.

LUCRETIUS.

INVOCATION TO VENUS

AND

INTRODUCTION OF THE EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY.

PARAPHRASE.

(*De rerum natura, lib.* 1.)

BENIGNANT Mother of the Ænead race,
Venus, to gods and men delightful l., Thou
That, underneath the sliding signs of heaven,
With concourse throngest the ship-bearing sea
And fruitful earth: by whose conceiving, all
That lives doth leap into the light o' the sun:
Thee, Goddess, thee, at thine approach, the winds
Flee, and the skyey clouds: the dœdal earth
To thee her flow'rets sweet uprears: to thee
The waters wide of Ocean laugh, and all
The stainless heaven in full-pour'd light is clear.
Soon as the vernal forehead of the day
Unveil'd appears, what time the procreant gale
Of free Favonius nimbly breathes abroad,
Thee, Goddess, and thy comings, thrill'd at heart
By thy strong sweetness, first the aëry birds
Herald; and then, their happy haunts about,
The wild herds bound, and swim the torrent brooks.
So taken by delight of thy sweet lures

With fond desire, the life of all that lives
To follow thee, where'er thou wilt, is fain;
Till last, amid the seas, among the hills,
And by the flowing of the headlong streams,
Green grassy lawns, and leafy homes of birds,
In every breast implanting balmy love,
Each, in his several kind, thou dost constrain
With lusty heart life's ages to renew.

Sole, who dost universal nature sway,
Since without thee may never aught arise
Into the regions of celestial light,
Nor lovely aught, nor aught delightful be,
Thee my divine associate I desire
In verses yet unwritten, to reveal
The NATURE OF THE UNIVERSE OF THINGS,
Which now I meditate for Memmius' son,
Memmius my friend; whom, Goddess, thou hast will'd,
Gifted in all, at all times to excel.
So much the more, Divine Inspirer, grant
Enduring sweetness to these words of mine:
And lull, meanwhile, war's barbarous business all
To slumbrous rest the lands and seas around:
For thou alone our mortal hearts canst help
With hushful peace. Since Mars armipotent,
That over war's wild labours lorddom wields,
Oft in thy lap, by love's eternal wound
O'ermaster'd, flings himself; and, gazing up
(His full firm-moulded throat back-sloped at ease),
Into his soul thy sweetness there he breathes,
There feeds on love his famisht looks, the while,

His sigh'd-forth spirit upon thy lip doth hang.
O'er him, so leaning, as thy sacred form,
O Goddess, all its fluent beauty bends,
Pour from thy lips a language of soft sounds,
And for thy Romans, O Renown'd, beseech
Untroubled peace. For, neither may we hope
With even mind, in this uneven hour
That shakes the land, our purpose to pursue,
Nor Memmius' noble scion, in a time
So toss'd, be wanting to the common weal.

For what remains, to me, O Memmius, lend
Thine ears' free listening; and, from cares withdrawn,
Thyself to truth's pure argument address.
Nor yet, despised ere comprehended, spurn
My gifts, for thee, with studious zeal, disposed.
For of the supreme order of the spheres,
The gods, and nature's primal sources all,
Discourse with thee I purpose; and to show
Whence nature all things doth to being bring,
Put forth, and nourish; whither, also, she
Anon, dissolving, doth restore them all.
These, in the rendering of our argument,
Matter, we call; the elemental seeds
And generative substances of things;
Naming them primal; since all things that are
From these, the first, derivatively come.

For all the being of the gods must needs,
Of its own nature, perfect peace enjoy,
Living immortally, far off removed
From all this coil of sublunary things:

Exempt from peril, from all pain exempt,
Itself to itself sufficing, and of us
Naught needing, neither by the good, nor ill
Men do, disposed to favour or to wrath.

What time man's life before his own eyes lay
Low grovelling, ground to earth beneath the weight
Of grim Religion, that from cloudy air
Her lifted head in heaven put forth, and stood
High over men with horrible countenance,
A man in Greece, then first of all mankind,
Dared to uplift, against her, mortal eyes,
And, fearless fronting, firm withstand, her. Him
Nor rumours of the gods, nor thunder-bolts,
Nor heaven with muttering menace, could dismay
But rather all the more within him roused
Sharp courage, and the yearning of his soul
To be the first to shatter the shut bars
Of Nature's portals. Therefore, his soul's strength
Prevail'd: and he, in high procedure, far
O'erpass'd the wide world's burning boundary walls,
And traversed in the spirit and the thought
The vast immeasurable infinite.
Thence, now, triumphant, he to us reports
What may be; what may not be; what, in fine,
Is the capacity of all things; what
The bound abysmal. Whence, in turn, brought down
And trodden 'neath our feet Religion writhes.
Us level with heaven's height his victory sets.

DANTE.

THE FIRST CANTO OF THE INFERNO.

PARAPHRASE.

(*In terza rima.*)

Upon the journey of our life midway
Methought that, from the right path stray'd, I stood
In a wood obscure. Full hard it is to say
How savage, rough, and stubborn, was that wood:
Whereof such dread as death can scarce excel
My thought renews. But, to set forth the good
Which there I found, I needs must also tell
What other things I did encounter there.
Into this wood how me the chance befell
To enter, memory may not well declare,
So full of slumber was I at that place
Whence, leaving the true path, I wander'd here.
But, soon as I had near'd a mountain's base,
Whereby the vale subsided, that with fear
My heart had pierced, I, lifting up my face,
Beheld his shoulders in the rays, now clear,
Of that full planet robed, which pilots right
Man's every path. Whereat, were quieted
A little the long stirrings of affright

That in the hollow of my heart were bred
By the so piteous passage of the night.
And even as one that, with back-turnèd head,

When up from out of ocean 'scaped to shore,
Pants, and the perilous deep doth wistful scan,
So turn'd my spirit, flying still, to explore

That pass yet never left by living man.
Anon, athwart the wilderness, once more
I, after rest of wearied limbs, began

To foot the upward path; where of my feet
The one firm-set was lowest all the way.
And lo, a lithe she-leopard, passing fleet,

With fur of many colours coated gay,
Hard by the upslope! Nor would she retreat
Thenceforth from sight, but round my path did play

Till oft I turn'd with purpose back to fare.
It was the season when the morning springs,
And now, amid the stars that with him were

When Love Divine first moved those beauteous things,
The sun was rising. Hope the happy air,
The season sweet, and gay apparellings

Of that bright beast inspired: yet 'twas not so
With me, but what my hope was made worse dread
By vision of what seem'd a lion, who

Against me came with high-uplifted head,
And all so hunger-mad, 'twas even as tho'
Air's self the awe of him disquieted.

Therewith a she-wolf, that did look to be
Stuff'd in her leanness with all lusts; and, long
Ere now, with miseries manifold hath she

Made lean the life of many a mortal throng.
So huge a heaviness she cast on me,
Wrought from her aspect fierce, of fear so strong,
That of the height all hope I lost. As one,
Glad of his getting, when to him is nigh
The time that takes it from him, maketh moan
With all his being's might, even so was I,
In such a sudden sorrow so far gone;
By that unpeaceable beast continually
Tormented; which, sore baffling me, at last
Little by little drove me backward where
The sun is silent. There, down ruining fast,
Nigh to the nether space, my sense was ware
Of one before me in the wildness vast,
That, for long silence, seem'd faint-voiced. To him,
Soon as I saw him, "Pity me!" I cried,
"Whate'er thou beest, true man, or shadow dim."
"No man: but what was once man," he replied.
"Lombards were my begetters, both of them,
And Mantuans they, by country, either side.
Myself *sub Julio* born, though late, at Rome
Beneath benign Augustus dwelt, i' the day
Of feign'd and fabling gods. Poet, him come
From Troy, just offspring of Anchises grey,
When burn'd was Ilium, once his haughty home,
I sung. But thou, why dost thou rather, say,
To perils such return, than scale yon mount
Delightful, source and cause of every bliss?"
"O art thou Virgil, and indeed that fount
Whence such full flow of utterance streams?" to this

I, with shamed forehead, answer'd, "Thee I count
The light and honour of all song that is!
Requite me my much love, and study slow,
That me to search thy volume have constrain'd.
Thou art my master, and my maker thou,
Thou only he of whom I have obtain'd
That style whose beauty me makes honour'd now!
Behold what beast compels me leave ungain'd
That height! O famed for wisdom, from her paw
That shakes my veins and pulses, save me!" He,
Soon as the weeping of my woe he saw,
Made response to me, "Other pathway thee
Behoves it to attempt, if from the jaw
Of this wild desert thou thyself would'st free.
She against whom thou clamourest, that she-beast,
Lets no man pass her, but doth all impede
Even to the death. The greed of whose grim breast
So cursèd is, not anything can feed
Her ravenous lust, which, ever after feast,
Worse famine than before doth in her breed.
Many the beasts wherewith she couples be,
And many more they shall be, till arrive
That Greyhound which shall pine her heart, till she
Wretchedly perish. Not by land shall live,
Nor yet by lucre, but by wisdom, he,
And love and virtue. And his folk shall thrive
'Twixt either Feltro. He shall lift on high
That so-low-fallen Italy for whose sake
Maiden Camilla in time past did die,
Euryalus, Nisus, Turnus: and shall make

From his pursuing through all cities fly
Back into Hell her that Hell's bound to break
Hate first impell'd. I, therefore, for thy good
Considering, thee now counsel and commend
To follow me. And I, from out this wood
Thy guide will be, with whom thou mayest wend
That everlasting deep where dwells the brood
Of those whose desperate shrieks thine ears shall rend,
And gaze on spirits of the former time
In dole, demanding second death; then who,
Content, in fire endure, with hope to climb
Hereafter, whensoever, time be due,
To the beatified: whose blissful clime
If thou to visit then aspirest too,
Unto that end another spirit shall be;
Worthier than I; to whose high ministering
Thee will I, then departing, leave. For me
He that above hath empire and is king
Holds rebel to his law, and doth decree
That by my means shall none have entering
Into His state. He in all parts hath sway,
But there His throne is, there His palace high,
There doth He chiefly dwell. O happy they
Whom there He chooses!"
And to him, then I,
"O poet, by that God that in thy day
Thou didst not know (this ill and worse to fly)
I charge thee, lead me where thou said'st, aright;
That I may see Saint Peter's Gate, and those
That, by thy showing, be in such sad plight."
Onward he moved: and I behind him close.

FRANCESCA DA RIMINO.

PARAPHRASE.

(Fifth Canto of the Inferno.)

WHEN of my Teacher I had learn'd the names
Of those renownèd knights of other days,
And theirs, the former time's most famous dames,
Lost in sad wonder, after mute amaze,
"Bard," I began, "much is my heart inclined
To parley with yon twain that, where I gaze,
Seem coming, borne so light upon the wind."
And he to me: "Their nearer neighbouring note;
Then, by the love that moves them, thus entwined,
Charge them, and they will come." No sooner smote
The swift gust near us, which those spirits, join'd,
Did simultaneous to our sight upfloat,
Than, moved to utterance, "Come! O come," I cried,
"Afflicted souls! nor yet to our inquiring
Deny discourse, if by nought else denied,"
As doves, solicited by fond desiring,
To their loved nest, on steady wings and wide,
Through air are wafted by the sweet inspiring
Of their own wishes swift; so, parting there

Dido's dim throng, the twain toward us sail'd
In such wise speeding through that evil air;
So much my cry compassionate prevail'd.

"O being that, beneficent and fair,
Through this obscure comest, visiting," they wail'd,
"Us that have earth embrued with bloody stain,

Were He, the Universal King, our friend,
Since thou hast pity on our pitiless pain,
Prayers to Him we for thy peace would send.

Whate'er to hear, or haply tell, thou art fain,
To tell or hear, thy bidding we attend,
What time, as now, the wind is whist. The land

That bore me seaward lies where Po proceeds
Down, with his sequent waters, to his rest.
Love, that in gentle heart scant kindling breeds,

Him, by the fairness of the form that drest
This spirit once (and yet indignant bleeds
Sharp memory of its taking off!) possest;

Love, that in one beloved doth love beget,
Me too well pleased with pleasing him, so well
That, as thou seest, he hath not left me yet:

Love led us to one death: Caïna's hell
Waits him that spilt our lives." Such response met
My sense, from such resentful sorrowing sent,

That so long, for the sadness of it, was
My countenance in such dejection bent,
The Poet cried, "What musest thou?" "Alas!"

I answer'd, "What sweet thoughts, what fond intent
Have brought them to this miserable pass!"
Then, yet once more returning to the two,

"Francesca, pitifullest tears," I cried,
"For thy deep woes I weep. Yet tell me how
To him and thee did Love the means provide,

First in the time of your sweet sighs, to know
Your yet uncertain wishes?" She replied,
"There is no greater pang than to recall

In misery days of happiness that were.
And that thy Teacher knows. Yet I, if all
So deep be thy desire to see laid bare

Of our love's growth the root original,
Will speak as one that weeping tells his care.
For pleasant passing of the time, one day,

Of love-thrall'd Launcelot the tale we read:
We were alone: all danger far away
From our suspecting: though the colour fled

Our faces oft, and oft our looks to stray
Into each other's eyes that reading led.
One point alone o'ercame us. We the while

Thus reading still, still unsuspecting ever,
When as we read of that so long'd-for smile
That such deep love did, with such dear endeavour.

To so sweet kissing of sweet lips beguile,
He that from me shall be disparted never
Me on the mouth all trembling kist. Accurst

The felon book was, and its scribe as well! *
That day we read no more.
While thus the first,
The other spirit made moan so miserable

* "*Galeotto fu il libro, e chi lo scrisse.*"
Those commentators who affirm that the *Galeotto* of this line

That, by sick pity all my sense disperst,
Down, as to earth a dead corpse falls, I fell."

is the proper name of GALAHAD are probably right. They have, at least, ample warrant for their opinion in the sixty-sixth chapter of the Italian Romance of Lancilotto, relating "*Come la Reina conobbe Lancilotto . . . e come la prima congiunzione fu fatta fra Lancilotto e Ginevra per lo mezzo di Galeotto.*" The obvious sense of the passage is that both the book and its author were go-betweens. But, although the go-between of the Italian Romance is called Galahad,—a name which probably was to Dante's Italian contemporaries (as that of Shakespeare's Pandarus was, and is, to Englishmen) a synonym for pimp, yet, in any case, the force of Dante's supposed allusion to him would be lost upon English readers who cannot associate the memory of the "Virgin Knight" with the ignoble character and functions ascribed to the Galahad of the Italian tale. For this reason I am content to take the simple common meaning of the word *galeotto*, viz., a felon—a scoundrel—the French *galérien*. Mr. Cary, indeed, translates the line thus—

"The book and writer both were love's purveyors;"

but this euphuistic paraphrase appears to me to convey no sense of the denunciatory intensity of Francesca's abrupt and startling exclamation. There is a dramatic effect in the angry suddenness with which the narrator of the tragedy breaks off her narration by an implied curse, just at the point where the situation she is describing was broken into, and abruptly ended, by a crime: and I think it little matters how you translate this word *galeotto*, so long as you retain unimpaired the imprecatory force which it gives to the whole passage.

O. M.

MICHELAGNOLO BUONARROTI.

SONNETS AND MADRIGALS.

IMITATED.

THE BIRTH OF LOVE.

I KNOW not if, in waking dream, or sleep,
His light, that made her, on my soul hath shined;
Or if from out the memory or the mind
Aught else of brightness, pour'd, my spirit doth steep.

Perchance within me some late beam I keep
Of Heaven's original glory left behind;
Some smouldering sense of scarce I know what kind
Of sweetest pain; whence I perforce must weep.

Not of myself, nor can I well declare
Whence, is the power that in me moves, and guides
My dazzled heart through every new surprise.

But, since I saw you, lady, thus I fare,
Whom bitter sweet with yes and no divides.
Doubtless 'tis all the doing of your eyes.

LOVE VINDICATED.

CALL it not impious crime, nor mortal sin,
That noble love that mighty Beauty excites
In him whose softly-opening heart invites
Some beam of holier light to enter in.

Love wakes, and moves; and plumes his wings to win
His upward goal. And oft the soul, that slights
Her earthly home, to Heaven's ancestral heights
Doth, by his ardour lured, her flight begin.

The love that speaks of thee aspires on high,
Nor feebly burns nor falters. To obey
A baser passion my true heart were shamed.

True Love for Heaven, as Lust for Earth, doth sigh:
This doth the soul, that doth the senses, sway:
And at ignoble mark his bow is aim'd.

MADRIGALS.

I.

ME, though unbound yet free in vain,
What fetter binds and brings to thee?
If sight of thee, with unseen chain,
Can fetter those thyself would'st free,

What power have I those eyes to flee
Whose warm desire
The darts of Love hath dipt in fire?

II.

Why memory of those eyes, and the dear hope
Whereby I live not only, but am blest,
From hour to hour do all my days beguile,
Demand the cause, wherewith in vain I cope,
Of Love, and Nature, that allow no rest,
And the fond wont that mine hath been long while
With all life's hours to pile
Love's monument to thee.
Life soon were death, could life no longer see
Your light, sweet eyes:
For all my life is by your light begot,
And soon it dies
If banisht, after birth, to any spot
Unsweeten'd by the light that in you lies.

III.

How is it, that I am mine no more?
Who from myself hath banisht me?
Who in myself more seems to be
At home, than was myself before?
How hath it happ'd, that I should miss
The moment when she slipp'd so slyly
Into my heart? and what is this,
This wistful love, that through the eyes
Into the soul doth steal so shyly,
And, there grown bold and wanton, tries
A thousand ways of exit wily?

IV.

If, here, in sculptured stone,
Whereto erewhile did Art her form consign,
That form, while years roll on,
May live, O what with her sweet self,—divine
Not to mine only, but all mortal sight—
By Heaven shall then be done?
Since she Heaven's making is; this marble, merely mine!
Yet must she fade, and follow Time's brief flight;
And all her beauty is but hers in spite,
If Death, that takes her life, the dead stone spare.
What shall repair
This wrong to Nature done by Time's disdain,
If, while her son's works stay, her own be ta'en?

V.

While, to the call of Time, my days fleet fast,
Love still disputes Time's power,
Nor will forego one hour
That's owed him yet, despite the long years past.
My soul, that groans and cries
As one that, injured, dies,
Laments in me my better life downcast.
'Twixt what to bless and blast
Hath power,—'twixt Death and Love,
Dubious, my vext heart strove
To choose the best, yet doth it hug the worst.
Thus by bad custom is good counsel curst.

CANZONE.

Low doth life's flame burn down, and faint, in me,
Fast as from fallen thunder fades away
The fluttering fire that wing'd his ardent flight.
Love, all thine ancient hurts I pardon thee:
But my faint heart, where chill'd thy hot darts stay,
Deep wounded once, doth no new wounds invite.
If all thy fires these languid eyes could light,
The worn-out heart would not rekindle now
Its long-quench'd glow.
Wherefore I shun thee, Love, in self-disdain;
Too weak a wearying war to wage again.

Me, by new beauty, would'st thou, haply, lure
Back to the perilous pass, my dull desire,
Warn'd by old woes, will now no more essay?
Worst are those ills which later years endure:
And I should be as ice before the fire,
That doth not kindle, but dissolves away.
Death, from the danger of my later day
Sole saviour now, must pluck me from the harm
Of thy fierce arm,
That, working woe by sight of others' weal,
Still strives to whirl a long arrested wheel.

My soul, with whom Death parleys, doth prepare,
Taking cold counsel of herself, within
Sad shade of solemn thoughts that neighbour night,
This body soon to leave behind her, where
Her ghostly journey must, ere long, begin;
Which mingled hope and fear but dimly light.
Ah, Love! how fierce thou standest, full in sight
Of my sad eyes; strong-arm'd, from me to rend,
What me defend,
These timely thoughts of Death; that thy wild hours
May from a wither'd tree snatch leaves and flowers!

What can I more? What owe I thee? My debt
Is paid in full. More hours can he afford
Whose past's whole wealth thy greedy garner stocks?
What craft or what compulsion back may get
To thee my homage gone, ungenerous lord,
Who mak'st the pain thy seeming pity mocks?
The soul that hath undone her dungeon locks,
And loosed her bonds, knows better than again
To hug her chain,
And all her new-found freedom, fool'd, forego
His service to resume, that wrought her woe.

Whatever earth brings forth earth takes again:
And more and more all mortal beauty fleets:
Who loves (and this know I) is never free:
Near neighbour is great pleasure to great pain:
And most by those that deepest drain the sweets
The bitters in life's chalice tasted be.
O tyrant Love, what is thy will of me?

Wilt thou that I, oblivious of past ill,
Be thy fool still,
While the scant time, my near departure claims,
Be spent by thee on sorrows and on shames?

Go, song of mine, from ice by fire begot!
And haply if Love meet thee by the way,
Bid him delay
To war with one that challenges him not:
Tell him, he wins no glory by the blow
That smites a long-already-fallen foe.

RONSARD.

SONNETS AND CHANSONS.

PARAPHRASES.

I.

" *Voici le bois que ma saincte Angelette.*"

HERE is the wood that freshen'd to her song:
  See here the flowers that keep her footprints yet:
  Where, all alone, my saintly Angelette
Went wandering with her maiden thoughts along:

Here is the little rivulet where she stopp'd:
  And here the greenness of the grass shows where
  She linger'd through it, searching here and there
Those daisies dear which in her breast she dropp'd:

Here did she sing: and here she wept: and here
Her smile came back: and there I seem to hear
  Those faint half-words wherewith my heart is rife:
There did she sit: there childlike did she dance
To some vague impulse of her own romance.
  Ah, Love on all these thoughts unwinds my life!

II.

" *Cache pour cest nuict.*"

HIDE for a night thy horn, good Moon! Fair fortune
  For this shall keep Endymion ever prest
  Deep-dreaming amorous on thine argent breast,
Nor ever shall enchanter thee importune.

Hateful to me the day: most sweet the night!
I fear the myriad meddling eyes of day:
But courage comes with night. Close, close, I pray,
Your curtains, dear dark skies, on my delight!

Thou, too, thou Moon, thou too hast felt love's power!
Pan with a white fleece won thee for an hour.
And you, siderial signs in yonder blue,
Favour the fire whereby my heart is moved!
Forget not, signs, the greater part of you
Was only set in heaven for having loved.

III.

"*Page suy moy.*"

Follow, my Page, where the green grass embosoms
The enamell'd season's freshest-fallen dew:
Then home, and my still house with handfuls strew
Of frail-lived April's newliest-nurtured blossoms.

Take from the wall, now, my song-tunèd lyre.
Here will I sit, and charm out the sweet pain
Of a dark eye whose light hath burn'd my brain,
The unloving loveliness of my desire!

And here mine ink, and here my papers, place:
A hundred pages white, whereon to trace
A hundred words of desultory woe:
Words which shall last like graven diamonds sure,
That some day hence a future race may know,
And ponder on, the pain that I endure.

IV.

" Les espics sont à Ceres."

CERES hath her harvests sweet:
Chloris hath the young green grass:
Woods for Fauns with cloven feet:
His green laurel Phœbus has:
Minerva hath her olive tree:
And the pine's for Cybele.

Sweet sounds are for Zephyr's wings:
Sweet fruit for Pomona's bosom:
For the Nymphs are crystal springs:
And for Flora bud and blossom:
But sighings, weepings, sad ideas,
These alone are Cytherea's.

V.

" Ma douce jouvence."

MY sweet youth now is all done:
The strength and the beauty are gone:
The tooth now is black: and the head now is white:
And the nerves now are loos'd: in the veins
Only water (not blood now) remains
Where the pulse beat of old with delight.

Adieu! O my lyre! O adieu
You sweet women, my lost loves! and you,
Each dead passion! The end creepeth nigher.
Not one pastime of youth has kept pace
With my age: nought is left in their place
But the bed, and the cup, and the fire.

My head is confused with low fears,
And sickness, and too many years,
Some care in each corner I meet.
And wherever I linger, or go,
I turn back, and look after, to know
If Death be still dogging my feet:

Dogging me down the dark stair
That windeth, I cannot tell where,
To some Pluto, that opens for ever
His cave to all comers: alas,
How easily down it all pass,
And return from it—never, ah never!

DANISH.

Und wenn ein Irrlicht euch die Wege weisen sol,
So müst ihr's so genau nicht nehmen.

THE ELVES.

IMITATIONS.

1

STRETCHING the tired limbs over the ground,
Laying the head o'er the Elfin Mound,
Seem'd I, or dream'd I, to hear and to see
Two milk-white maidens come lightly to me,
So lightly to me?
I saw them but once: I shall see them no more.
Dreaming is o'er.

2

Two milk-white maidens: two little elf-girls:
One of them kist me under the curls:
One of them whisper'd me warm in the ear
"Up, and dance with us! the moon shines clear
On mountain and mere."
I saw them but once: I shall see them no more.
Dreaming is o'er.

3

"And look! and my sisters shall glance the sweet glances:
And rise! and my sisters shall dance the sweet dances:

And list! and my sisters shall sing the sweet songs."
And the Elves of the forest came round me in throngs,
Around me in throngs!
I saw them but once: I shall see them no more.
Dreaming is o'er.

4

And a marvellous music in air was heard,
And voices neither of breeze nor bird:
And the torrent, that never before stood still,
Stopp'd all at once of his own wild will
On the windy hill.
I saw them but once: I shall see them no more.
Dreaming is o'er.

5

The torrent, that never before was at rest,
Still'd every beat of his bubbling breast:
And the little white delicate fishes all
Danced, dimpling the diamond waterfall
That stood like a wall.
I saw them but once: I shall see them no more.
Dreaming is o'er.

6

The little s'y fishes with silvery tails
Paddled and play'd: and the nightingales
And all the sweet things that live in the air
Sang aloud down the valleys, and everywhere
Through the moonlight fair.

I saw them but once: I shall see them no more.
Dreaming is o'er.

7

"And wilt thou be of us? and wilt thou be ours?
We will play thee strange music, and ply thee strange powers:
Dance thee sweet dances, and sing thee sweet tunes:
And teach thee to read and to write the great runes
That charms stars and moons."
I saw them but once: I shall see them no more.
Dreaming is o'er.

8

"And that dreaming dragon, that sleepeth, roll'd
Fold over fold, on a heap of red gold,
Shall lift up the eyelid from over the eye,
And sleepily see thee, and, seeing thee, fly
To the desert, and die."
I saw them but once: I shall see them no more.
Dreaming is o'er.

9

Round the elfin ring did the music flow:
And they dancèd high, and they dancèd low.
I watch'd them, drooping an eyelid bland,
But grasping the glaive in the wary hand,
Not trusting the band.
I saw them but once: I shall see them no more.
Dreaming is o'er.

10

And "Hearest thou? fearest thou, fool, to feel pleasure?
Delayest thou? weighest thou mirth with a measure?
We will give thee quick riddance: long rest from all strife:
And cut off the cares that encumber thy life
With a sharp, sharp knife."
I saw them but once: I shall see them no more.
Dreaming is o'er.

11

If the cock had not crow'd at that moment so shrill,
And the red dawn flicker'd far off on the hill,
Which sent them all flitting, by tens and twelves,
I might have been there with them yet, and the Elves
Had my soul to themselves.
But I saw them once only, and saw them no more.
Dreaming is o'er.

12

Thou, that ridest by night over elfin ground,
Lay not the head on the Elfin Mound.
And let not the eyelid sink over the eye:
For the Elves are fair: and the Elves are sly:
And a man might die.
Once only I saw them: I see them no more.
Dreaming is o'er.

LORD OLAF.

PART I.

1

To the merry wedding feast to bid the wedding guest,
Light, Lord Olaf, unespied, in the middle night doth ride:
But the dance flies fast through the hollow, hollow wood,
And the white women dance in the wild wood.

2

O the merry, merry wives! fair they dance by fours and fives:
But the Elf Queen of them all . . . he hath heard the Elf Queen call,
And the dance flies fast through the hollow, hollow wood,
While the white women dance in the wild wood.

3

"Hail, Lord Olaf, to the dance! while the moon is in a trance,
And the shade is on the tree, get thee down and dance with me,
For the dance flies fast through the hollow, hollow wood,
And the white women dance in the wild wood."

4

" Nay, nay," he answer'd, " nay, I may neither list nor stay,
For to-morrow, O to-morrow is my merry marriage day."
But the dance flies fast through the hollow, hollow wood,
And the white women dance in the wild wood.

5

" List, Lord Olaf! an' ye will dance with me by yonder hill,
Ye shall have a sark of silk, soft as sleep and white as milk."
And the dance flies fast through the hollow, hollow, wood,
And the white women dance in the wild wood.

6

" Hist! a silken sark snow-white: for my mother bleach'd it bright
In the mad moonlight, in the middle of the night."
O the dance flies fast through the hollow, hollow, wood,
And the white women dance in the wild wood.

7

" Nay, I may no more delay; neither list to what ye say;
For to-morrow, for to-morrow is my merry marriage day."

But the dance flies fast through the hollow, hollow wood,
And the white women dance in the wild wood.

8

"List, Lord Olaf! an' with me ye will dance by yonder tree,
Ye shall have a scarf of gold broider'd bright on scarlet fold."
And the dance flies fast through the hollow, hollow wood,
And the white women dance in the wild wood.

9

"Take the golden scarf away! I may neither look nor stay:
For to-morrow, O to-morrow, is my merry marriage day."
But the dance flies fast through the hollow, hollow wood,
And the white women dance in the wild wood.

10

"Hist, Lord Olaf! scarlet fold, broider'd gay with burning gold:
For I wrought it in the cold of the cavern'd hills of old."
O the dance flies fast through the hollow, hollow wood,
And the white women dance in the wild wood.

11

" Keep, O keep the silken sark, and the golden scarf! for hark,
From the far off forest dells comes a sound of bridal bells! "
But the dance flies fast through the hollow, hollow wood,
And the white women dance in the wild wood.

12

" An' ye will not dance with me, list, Lord Olaf, ye shall be
Fairest bridegroom evèr borne to his grave on bridal morn."
Ho! the dance flies fast through the hollow, hollow wood,
And the white women dance in the wild wood.

13

Light she leapt to his red horse: " Now ride on across the gorse!
" Ride! " she cried, " Not every bride clasps a dead man to her side! "
And the dance flies fast through the hollow, hollow wood,
And the white women dance in the wild wood.

PART II.

1

Pale, Lord Olaf stood before his own good castle door,
And his mother from the gate call'd "Lord Olaf, why so late?"
The Elf Queen, the Elf Queen, her kissing is so cold!

2

"And, Lord Olaf, do ye ail? Why, son Olaf, why so pale?
For thy cheek is white as death, and there's blood upon the heath."
The Elf Queen, the Elf Queen, her kissing is so cold!

3

"Mother, mother, much I ail: and my cheek may well be pale.
Evil, evil was the chance! I have seen the Elf Queen dance.
The Elf Queen, the Elf Queen, whose kissing is so cold!"

4

"Hold! what say ye, O my son? and what is it ye have done?
And what shall I tell thy bride?" "Tell her, tell her that I ride,"
(O Elf Queen, O Elf Queen, thy kissing is so cold!)

5

"That I ride around, around in the forest, with my hound:
In the forest through the gorse, to try my red roan horse."
But the Elf Queen, the Elf Queen, her kissing is so cold!

6

Blithely blows the castle horn for the merry marriage morn:
And the silver music swells from the swinging bridal bells.
But the Elf Queen, the Elf Queen, her kissing is so cold!

7

Come the minstrels: comes the priest: with the merry wedding guest:
And the bride with the bride maiden: and the banquet board is laden.
The Elf Queen, the Elf Queen, her kissing is so cold!

8

And the hydromel is pour'd, and the red wine, round the board.
"Mother, mother, where is he that should be here with me?"
The Elf Queen, the Elf Queen, her kissing is so cold!

9

"O he rides around, around in the forest with his hound;
In the forest, through the gorse with his greyhound and his horse."
The Elf Queen, the Elf Queen, her kissing is so cold!

10

"Nay, his horse is in the stall, and his greyhound in the hall:
And O, dear as these may be, more Lord Olaf loveth me!"
The Elf Queen, the Elf Queen, her kissing is so cold!

11

"Long his horse may stand in stall, and his greyhound bide in hall:
Weary men do slumber deep: and he lyeth in a sleep."
The Elf Queen, the Elf Queen, her kissing is so cold!

12

Then the scarlet cloth she raised, and upon his face they gazed:
And fear fell upon them all, the feasters in that hall.
The Elf Queen, the Elf Queen, her kissing is so cold!

13

"O maiden, maiden, weep! He that sleepeth such a sleep

Needeth but a narrow bed!" Not a word the maiden said.
The Elf Queen, the Elf Queen, her kissing is so cold!

14

On the mournful morrow morn three corpses forth were borne:
From the castle corpses three: and two were fair to see.
O Elf Queen, O Elf Queen, thy kissing is so cold!

SERVIAN.

Omne meum : nihil meum.

NOTE.

WHEN the following poems were first published they were criticised in the *Saturday Review* by a writer, than whom there are probably few Europeans more thoroughly conversant with the languages, the literature, and the social life of the East; and for whom I entertain too sincere a respect to neglect this opportunity of endeavouring to remove from his mind a misapprehension, occasioned (much to my regret) by the unintentional ambiguity of my own language.

Assuming from some words in a short preface, by which the first edition of them was accompanied, that these verses were offered to the public as a translation of songs orally collected by myself from the wandering singers of them in Servia, my critic proceeded, (and, I must add, very courteously) to protest against a pretension which I had certainly no intention whatever of putting forward in their behalf.

These ballads, as was stated in the preface to which I refer, are neither Translations nor Paraphrases. Strictly speaking, indeed, I cannot properly call them even Imitations; for they attempt neither the imitation of Servian metres, nor the treatment of subject in purely Servian forms, nor even the faithful expression of purely Servian sentiment. In fact, they represent nothing more than the result of a passing wish to

embody in forms of my own the personal impressions made upon myself by the popular poetry of a people amongst whom I was living when they were written. In the preface alluded to reference was made to the French prose translation of Servian ballads and legends (from which the subjects of these verses are taken) in the work of M. Dozon: to the privilege of whose personal intercourse, no less than to his interesting book, I am indeed greatly indebted for information about a country in which he has long resided; although, in the composition of these versions of Servian song, I also received assistance from others of my acquaintance in that country.

But in that unlucky preface it was said of these verses that, "whether weeds or wild-flowers, they had, at least, been gathered upon native soil." And it is to this not very original figure of speech, occurring, as it did, immediately after a description of the blind bards of Servia, and the mode in which the traditions of their race are preserved by the songs they sing,—that I must attribute the misfortune of having conveyed to the mind of my accomplished critic an impression that I intended to pass off my own verses as derived from original sources, and translated by myself from the recitation of those singers. I am sorry for it. I intended nothing of the kind. All I meant to imply was that my verses had been prompted, and were characterized, by the local influences of a period passed in contemplation of much of the scenery to which they often refer, and in personal contact with the people from whose history, habits, and sentiments, the subjects of them are derived. In short, the publication of

these ballads was occasioned only by a belief that the freshness of impressions, thus directly received, might possibly have imparted to them some of the qualities which ought to be found in original verse. There is a merit which belongs to accurate translation, and there is a merit which belongs to spirited paraphrase. I presume to think, however, that there is also another kind of merit (belonging neither to the one nor the other) in the vividness with which a writer may succeed in imparting to the minds of his readers sensations added to the stock of his own individuality by contact with a literature embodying the thoughts and fancies of an experience unfamiliar to himself and to his countrymen. It is the attainment of this kind of merit which is here aimed at. Goethe, indeed, who probably knew nothing of Servian, has left us a version of one of these very ballads: and Goethe's version has a merit and an interest of its own, as an original work, notwithstanding the fact that it was composed from an Italian translation. Goethe was never in Servia, nor could any personal knowledge of that country be needed by so great an artist as Goethe, either to prompt, or justify, the annexation of any province of Servian Song to his literary domains. For myself, however, I confess that if I had never been in Servia these verses would never have been written, and should they succeed in conveying to the sense of any reader of them something of the novelty of those impressions which induced me to write them, they will have sufficiently accomplished the object of their author.

OWEN MEREDITH.

THE BATTLE OF KOSSOVO.

I.

THE Sultan Murad o'er Kossovo comes
With banners and drums.

There, all in characters fair,
He wrote a letter; and there
Bade his estaffettes despatch
To bear it to Krouchevatch,
To the white-wall'd town of the Tzar,
To the hands of Prince Lazar.
"Listen, Lazarus, chief of the Serbs, to me!
That which never hath been, that which never shall be,
Is that two lords one land should sway,
And the same rayas two tributes pay.
Send to me, therefore, the tributes and keys;
The golden keys of each white town;
And send me a seven years' tribute with these.

But if this thou wilt not do,
Then come thou down over Kossovo:
On the field of Kossovo come thou down,
That we may divide the land with our swords.
These are my words."

When Lazarus this letter had read,
Bitter, bitter were the tears he shed.

II.

A grey bird, a falcon, comes flying apace
From Jerusalem, from the Holy Place;
And he bears a light swallow abroad.
It is not a grey bird, a falcon, God wot!
But the Saint Elias; and it is not
A light swallow he bears from afar,
But a letter from the Mother of God
To the Tzar who in Kossovo stays.
And the letter is dropt on the knees of the Tzar;
And these are the words that it says:—

"Lazarus, Prince of a race that I love,
Which empire choosest thou?
That of the heaven above?
Or that of the earth below?
If thou choose thee an earthly realm,
Saddle horse, belt, spur, and away!
Warriors, bind ye both sabre and helm,
And rush on the Turks, and they
With their army whole shall perish.
But, if rather a heavenly crown thou cherish,

At Kossovo build ye a temple fair.
There no foundations of marble lay,
But only silk of the scarlet dye.
Range ye the army in battle-array,
And let each and all full solemnly
Partake of the blessèd sacrament there.
For then of a certainty know
Ye shall utterly perish, both thou,
And thine army all; and the Turk shall be
Lord of the land that is under thee."

When the Tzar he read these words,
His thoughts were as long and as sharp as swords.
"God of my fathers, what shall I choose?
If a heavenly empire, then must I lose
All that is dearest to me upon earth;
But if that the heavenly here I refuse,
What then is the earthly worth?
It is but a day,
It passeth away,
And the glory of earth full soon is o'er,
And the glory of God is more and more."

"What is this world's renown?"
(His heart was heavy, his soul was stirr'd.)
"Shall an earthly empire be preferr'd
To an everlasting crown?
At Kossovo build me a temple fair:
Lay no foundations of marble down,
But only silk of the scarlet dye."
Then he sent for the Servian Patriarch:
With him twelve bishops to Kossovo went.

It was at the lifting of the dark:
They ranged the army in battle-array,
And the army all full solemnly
Received the blessed sacrament,
And hardly was this done, when lo!
The Turks came rushing on Kossovo.

III.

Ivan Kossantchitch, my probratime,
What of the Turk? How deem ye of him?
Is he strong, is he many, is he near?
Our battle, say! may we show him?
May we hope to overthrow him?
What news of him bringest thou here?

And Ivan Kossantchitch replied:
"Milosch Obilitch, my brother dear,
I have lookt on the Turk in his pride.
He is strong, he is many, he is near,
His tents are on every side.
Were we all of us hewn into morsels, and salted,
Hardly, I think, should we salt him his meat.
Two whole days have I journeyed, nor halted,
Toward the Turk, near the Turk, round him, and never
Could I number his numbers, or measure his end.
From the Maple to Sazlia, brother, my feet
Have wander'd; from Sazlia round by the river,
Where the river comes round to the bridge with a bend;
And over the bridge to the town of Zvétchan;

From Zvétchan to Tchéchan, and further, and ever
Further, and over the mountains, wherever
Foot may fall, or eye may scan,
I saw nought but the Mussulman,

"Eastward and westward, and southward and nor'-
ward,
Scaling the hillside, and scathing the gorse,
Horseman to horseman, and horse against horse;
Lances like forests when forests are black;
Standards like clouds flying backward and forward,
White tents like snowdrifts piled up at the back.
The rain may, in torrents, fall down out of heaven,
But never the earth will it reach:
Nothing but horsemen, nothing but horses,
Thick as the sands which the wild river courses
Leave, after tempest, in heaps on the beach.
Murad, for pasture, hath given
To his horsemen the plain of Mazguite.
Lances a-ripple all over the land,
Tost like the bearded and billowy wheat
By the winds of the mountain driven
Under the mountain slab.
Murad looks down in command
Over Sitnitza and Lab."

"Answer me, Ivan, answer ye me,
Where may the tent of Murad be?
His milk-white tent, may one see it afar
O'er the plain, from the mountain, or out of the
wood?
For I have sworn to the Prince Lazar

A solemn vow upon Holy Rood,
To bring him the head of the Turkish Tzar,
And set my feet in his infidel blood."

"Art mad, my pobratime, art mad?
Where may the tent be, the tent of Murad?
In the midst of a million eyes and ears:
In the midst of a million swords and spears,
In the heart of the camp of the Turk.
Fatal thy vow is, and wild is the work;
For hadst thou the wings of the falcon, to fly
Fleeter than lightning, along the deep sky,
The wings of the falcon, though fleet be they,
Would never bear thee thy body away."

And Milosch abjured him: "O Ivan, my brother
(Tho' not by the blood, yet more dear than all other),
See thou say nothing of this to our lord,
Lest ye sorrow his heart; and say never a word,
Lest our friends be afflicted, and fail. But thou
Shalt rather answer to who would know,
And boldly aver to the Tzar,
'The Turk is many, but more are we,
And easy and light is the victory:
For he is not an army of men of war,
But a rabble rather
Of rascals that gather
To promise of plunder from places afar;
Priests and pedlars,
Jugglers and fiddlers,
Dancers and drummers,
Varlets and mummers,

Boys and buffoons—all craven loons
That never in bûrly of battle have bled,
Never have combated sword in hand;
They are only come, the beggars, for bread,
And to feed on the fat of the land.
And the dreadful dismal dysentery
Is among their men, and their horses die,
Of a daily increasing malady." "

IV.

Lazarus, lord of the Serbs, our Tzar,
At Krouchevatch high Slava doth hold.
Around him, sitting by cups of gold,
His sons and his seigneurs are.

To right, the reverend Youg Bogdan;
Round whom the nine young Yougovitch;
To left, that thrice-accursèd man,
The traitor black, Vouk Brankovitch;
And many a lord, along the board,
And last of all, in the knightly train,
Milosch, the manly Voïvod;
Next him, Servian Voïvodes twain,
Ivan Kossantchitch, his brother in God,
And Milan Toplitza, a man without stain.

And the Tzar bade pour the purple wine,
And, brimming up his golden cup,
Lookt all adown that lordly line.

"To whom shall the King first pledge?" he began.
"If first to age, this health should be,

To no man do I drink but thee,
Revered old Youg Bogdan;
But if to rank on high degree,
Vouk Brankovitch, I drink to thee.
If to friendship be the toast,
My brothers nine, I know not which
Amongst you all I love the most,
You gallant-hearted Yougovitch!
If to beauty, then be thine,
Ivan, first the flowing wine.
If to length and strength of limb,
Then the wine to Milan brim,
No man measures height with him.
If to valour, more than even
Stature, beauty, friendship, age,
Our first honours should be given,
Then to Milosch must we pledge.
Yet, be that as it may be,
Milosch, I drink to none but thee!
Milosch, thy health!
Drink, man, drink!
Why should any man care to think?
Traitor or true, or friend or foe,
To thee I drain this goblet low;
And, ere to-morrow, at Kossovó,
Thou thy master hast betray'd
To the Turk, for wages paid,
(Friend or foe, whate'er befall,
True or traitor, what care I?)
The King drinks to thee in this hall,
Lip to lip, and eye to eye,
Pledge me now in sight of all;

And, since to thee I fill it up,
Take thou too this golden cup,
And add it to ill-gotten wealth—
Milosch, thy health!"

Lightly Milosch bounded up,
Lightly caught the golden cup,
To the black earth bow'd his head,
And "Noble master, thanks!" he said,
"For the pledge thou pledgest me,
And thanks that, of thy courtesy,
Thou to me dost first allot,
A true, true health, O King, to thee,
To pledge back in this golden token;
Thanks for this, my lord, but not
For the words which thou hast spoken.
For, oh! (and may my loyalty,
Dear liege, not fatal prove to me,
Before the truth is judged between
Us, and his fair company)
My true heart is sound and clean,
Traitor never have I been,
Traitor never will I be!
But at Kossovo to-morrow morn
I trust, as I am a living man,
A soldier and a Christian,
To go to the death for the true, true faith,
True to the last where my faith is sworn,
Careless of calumny, scorning scorn!
The traitor is sitting by thy side,
He toucheth thy robe, thy wine he drinketh,
To God and his king he hath foully lied,

Vouk Brankovitch, the servile-eyed,
Christian false, and perjured friend!
God judge between us twain i' the end,
And perish he in the thought he thinketh!
To-morrow a noble day will be,
For at Kossovo all men shall see
What is the truth betwixt us two,
And who is traitor, and who is true.
For I swear by the great sun in the sky,
And I swear by the living God on high
That judgeth us all, whate'er befall,
When at Kossovo upon battle-plain,
Murad, the Turk, I have sought and slain
(Sought and slain, for I swore by the rood,
To set my feet in his Turkish blood),
If God but grant me safe and sane
A living man to come again
Back to white-wall'd Krouchevatch,
And there that traitor foul I catch,
Vouk Brankovitch, I will have by the throat.
All men shall see it, and all men shall note,
For it shall be done in the light of the sun.
To my good war-lance I will fix his skull,
As a woman fixes a ball of wool
To her distaff when her spinning is done.
Then I will bear him to Kossovo,
Bear him back to the battle-plain;
All men shall see it, and all men shall know
Who is the traitor of us twain."

V.

At the royal board a noble pair

Sit together, and full sad they are.
Lazarus and his Militza fair,
The sweet-eyed Tzarina and the Tzar.
Troubled is the Tzar's broad brow,
The Tzarina's eyes are dim,
And, with tears that dare not flow,
The Tzarina says to him :—

"Lord Lazarus, O golden crown
Of Servia, and sweetheart my own!
To-morrow morn to Kossovo
With thee to the battle go
Servitors and Voïvodes.
I alone, in these abodes,
Vacant of thy voice, remain;
Hearing, haply, on the wind,
Murmurs of the battle-plain;
Heavy of heart, and sad of mind,
Silent in sorrow, alone with pain.
O think on this, my life, my lord,
Never a soul to carry a word
To Kossovo, from me to thee,
To Krouchevatch from thee to me;
Wherefore, lord of my brothers nine,
The sons of Youg, our father old,
(Golden stars in a crown of gold!)
Let one, for once, be wholly mine.
Mine to witness the tears I weep;
Mine to solace the vigil I keep;
Mine alone, of my nine brothers,
To pray with me for those eight others;
Of brothers nine, but leave me one

To swear by when the rest be gone!"

And Lazarus, lord of the Serbs, replied:
"Militza, sweetheart, wife true-eyed,
Of thy nine brothers, tell to me which
Thou lovest best, that he should rest
In our white palace to watch by thee.
Which of them, sweetheart?—tell to me!"
And she answer'd, "Bocko Yougovitch."
And Lazarus, lord of the Serbs, replied:
"Militza, sweetheart, wife true-eyed,
To-morrow, when from her red bower
The watery dawn begins to break,
Ere yet the sun hath felt his power
Seek thou the city walls, and take
Thy post against the Eastern gate:
There shalt thou see the army pass,
To mantle the field in martial state,
And trample the dew-drop out of the grass.
All lusty warriors, leal and true,
Who in battle have never turn'd their backs,
In complete steel, with curtle axe;
Each spearman true, as his own true steel.
And, foremost of all, that, with iron heel,
Crush the wet violet down in the moss,
With purple plumes, in vesture rich,
Thy brother, Bocko Yougovitch,
Bearing the standard of the Cross.
Seize thou the golden bridle-ring,
Greet him fair from his lord the king,
And bid him that he the standard yield
To whomsoever he deemeth best,

And turn about from the battle-field,
In our white palace with thee to rest."

VI.

Now, when the dawn from her red bower
Upclomb the chilly skies, and, all
Athwart the freshening city tower,
The silent light began to fall
About the breezy yellow flower
That shook on the shadowy city wall,
Militza, through the glimmering streets,
Goes forth against the Eastern gate.
There, all i' the morning light, she meets
The army on to the distant down,
Winding out of the dusky town,
To mantle the field in martial state,
And trample the dew-drop out of the grass.
O brothers, a goodly sight it was!
With curtle axe, in complete steel,
So many a warrior, lusty and leal,
So many a spearman, stout and true,
Marching to battle in order due.
And foremost among that stately throng,
With, over his helmet's golden boss,
Floating plumes of the purple rich,
The gallant Bocko Yougovitch
Bearing the standard of the Cross.
All blazing gold his corselet beam'd,
Imperial purple fold on fold,
The mighty Christian ensign stream'd
Over his red-roan courser bold;

And high upon the standard top
Against the merry morning gleam'd
An apple wrought of purest gold;
Thereon the great gold cross, from which
All glittering downward, drop by drop,
Great golden acorns, lightly hung,
Over his shining shoulder flung,
Flashes of light o'er Yougovitch.

She caught the bridle ring: in check
The red-roan courser paw'd the ground.
About her brother's bended neck
Her milk-white arm she softly wound,
And half in hope, and half in fear,
She whisper'd in the young man's ear:—
"Brother, my liege and thine, the king,
Commits me to thy comforting.
He greets thee fair, and bids me say
(The which with all my heart I pray)
That thou the royal ensign yield
To whomsoever thou deemest best,
And turn about from the battle-field
At Krouchevatch with me to rest,
That of nine brothers I may have one
To swear by when the rest be gone."

But "Foul befall," the young man said,
"The man that turns his horse's head,
Whoe'er he be, from battle-plain:
Turn thee, sister, turn again
To thy white tower! I will not yield
The Holy Cross 'tis mine to bear,

Nor turn about from the battle-field.
Not though the king should give, I swear,
The whole of Krouchevatch to me,
Would I turn thitherwards with thee.
To-day will be the noblest day
Yon sun in heaven did ever see;
Nor shall my own true comrades say
This day, in sorrow or scorn, of me,
—'The craven heart that dared not go
To the great fight at Kossovo;
That fear'd to find a saintly death,
Nor pour'd his blood for Holy Rood,
Nor fell for the Christian faith.'"
He prickt his horse toward the gate,
And, through a cloud of hoary mist
Glittering like one great amethyst,
Swept forth into the morning wan.
Then up there rides in royal state,
With his seven sons, old Youg Bogdan.
She stopt them one by one; she took
The bridle rein; she spoke to them all.
Not one of them all would turn and look:
Not one of them all would listen and wait;
But the trumpet sounded in the gate,
And they follow'd the trumpet call.

And after these, a little space,
Voïn Yougovitch not far
She spied come riding at slow pace,
Leading the destriers of the Tzar,
All trapt and housed with gold be they,

And going an amble by the way.
His good steed was of dapple grey.
She caught the bridle ring: in check
The good grey courser paw'd the ground.
Her milk-white arm she softly wound
About her brother's bended neck;
And half in hope, and half in fear.
She whisper'd in the young man's ear:—
"Brother, my liege, and thine, the king,
Commits me to thy comforting.
He greets thee fair, and bids me say
(The which with all my heart I pray)
That thou the royal destriers yield
To whomsoever thou deemest best,
And turn about from the battle-field
In Krouchevatch with me to rest,
That of nine brothers I may have one
To swear by when the rest be gone."

But "Sister, foul befall," he said,
"The man that turns his horse's head,
Whoe'er he be, from battle-plain:
Turn thee, sister, turn again
To thy white tower! I will not yield
The destriers of my lord the Tzar,
Nor turn about from the battle-field,
Where all my noble kinsmen are,
Albeit to meet my death I go
To the great fight at Kossovo;
To pour my blood for Holy Rood,
To fight to the death for the Christian Faith,

With my kinsmen all to fight and fall,
With our foreheads against the foe."

Through the gate he prickt his steed,
And off to the dreary downs afar,
Leading as fast as he might lead
The destriers of the Tzar.
But Dame Militza, when no more
She heard the echoing hoofs that bore
Her brother from her, even as one
From whom the light of life is gone,
Fell swooning on the cold curb-stone.

Then came the Tzar himself anon,
And his great war-horse pacing on,
Did stoutly neigh in lusty pride;
But when he past beside that stone,
He stopt, and stoopt, and swerv'd aside.
There, all her fair white length o'erthrown,
The Tzar his own true wife espied,
And fast the bitter tears down ran,
As he call'd to his servant Gouloban

"Good Gouloban, my faithful friend,
In this thy trusty service prove;
From off thy milk-white horse descend,
And, as thou dost thy master love,
In thy true arms thy mistress take,
With whom to her tall tower go;
And, God forgive thee for my sake,
But go not thou to Kossovo.
I will requite thee when again

I meet thee, if I be not slain,
Howbeit, I deem my doom at hand,
For the Turk is lord of half the land."

Down stept the trusty serving man,
Full fast his bitter tears down ran,
And sad was the heart of Gouloban.
He lifted up that drooping flower,
Lifted her on to his milk-white steed,
And rode with her to her tall tower,
As fast as he might speed.

There laid he her in linen bed,
And lowly laid her lovely head.
But o'er the airy morning smote,
Along the blowing breeze remote,
A solitary trumpet note.
Full well the milk-white war-horse knew
The music of that martial sound,
And in the courtyard paw'd the ground,
And blithely from his nostrils blew
The morning mist. Then Gouloban
Adown the turret stairway ran,
He leapt to stirrup, he leapt to selle,
From fleeting hands he waved farewell;
Again he heard the trumpet blow,
And he rode back to Kossovo.

VII.

All when the misty morn was low,
And the rain was raining heavily

Two ravens came from Kossovo,
Flying along a lurid sky:
One after one, they perch'd upon
The palace of the great Lazar,
And sat upon the turret wall.
One 'gan croak, and one 'gan call,
"Is this the palace of the Tzar?
And is there never a soul inside?"

Was never a soul within the hall,
To answer to the ravens' call,
Save Militza. She espied
The two black birds on the turret wall,
That all in the wind and rain did croak,
And thus the ravens she bespoke:
"In God's great name, black ravens, say,
Whence came ye on the wind to-day?
Is it from the plain of Kossovo?
Hath the bloody battle broke?
Saw ye the two armies there?
Have they met? And, friend or foe,
Which hath vanquisht? How do they fare?"

And the two black fowls replied:
"In God's great name, Militza, dame,
From Kossovo at dawn we came:
A bloody battle we espied:
We saw the two great armies there,
They have met, and ill they fare.
Fallen, fallen, fallen are
The Turkish and the Christian Tzar.
Of the Turks is nothing left;

Of the Serbs a remnant rests,
Hackt and hewn, carved and cleft,
Broken shields, and bloody breasts."
And lo! while yet the ravens spoke,
Up came the servant, Miloutine:
And he held his right hand, cleft
By a ghastly sabre stroke,
Bruised and bloody, in his left;
Gasht with gashes seventeen
Yawn'd his body where he stood,
And his horse was dripping blood.

"O sorrow, sorrow, bitter woe
And sorrow, Miloutine!" she said;
"For now I know my lord is dead.
For, were he living, well I know,
Thou hadst not left at Kossovo
Thy lord forsaken to the foe."

And Miloutine spake, breathing hard:
"Get me from horse: on cool greensward
Lay me, lay me, mistress mine:
A little water from the well;
To bathe my wounds in water cold,
For they are deep and manifold;
And touching my lip with rosy wine,
That I may speak before I die.
I would not die before I tell
The tale of how they fought and fell."
She got him from his bloody steed,
And wiped the death-drops from his brow,
And in the fresh grass laid him low;

And washt his wounds in water cold,
For they were deep and manifold;
Full ghastly did they gape and bleed:
She stanch'd them with her garment's fold,
And lightly held his body up,
And bathed his lips with rosy wine,
And all the while her tears down ran,
And dropt into the golden cup;
And still she question'd of the war:
"O tell me, tell me, Miloutine,
Where fell the glorious Prince Lazar?
Where are fallen my brothers nine?
Where my father, Youg Bogdan?
Where Milosch, where Vouk Brankovitch?
And where Strahinia Banovitch?"

Then when the servant, Miloutine,
Three draughts had drain'd of rosy wine,
Although his eyes were waxing dim,
A little strength came back to him.
He stood up on his feet, and, pale
And ghastly, thus began the tale:

"They will never return again,
Never return! ye shall see them no more;
Nor ever meet them within the door,
Nor hold their hands. Their hands are cold,
Their bodies bleach in bloody mould.
They are slain! all of them slain!
And the maidens shall mourn, and the mothers deplore,
Heaps of dead heroes on battle plain.

Where they fell, there they remain,
Corpses stiff in their gore.
But their glory shall never grow old
Fallen, fallen, in mighty war,
Fallen, fighting about the Tzar,
Fallen, where fell our lord Lazar!
Never more be there voice of cheer!
Never more be there song or dance!
Muffled be moon and star!
For broken now is the lance,
Shiver'd both shield and spear,
And shatter'd the scimitar.
And cleft is the golden crown,
And the sun of Servia is down,
O'erthrown, o'erthrown, o'erthrown,
The roof and top of our renown,
Dead is the great Lazar!

"Have ye seen when the howling storm-wind takes
The topmost pine on a hoary rock,
Tugs at it, and tears, and shakes, and breaks,
And tumbles it into the ocean?
So when this bloody day began,—
In the roaring battle's opening shock,
Down went the grey-hair'd Youg Bogdan.
And following him, the noblest man
That ever wore the silver crown
Of age, grown grey in old renown,
One after one, and side by side
Fighting, thy nine brothers died:
Each by other, brother brother
Following, till death took them all.

But of these nine the last to fall
Was Bocko. Him, myself, I saw,
Three awful hours—a sight of awe,
Here, and there, and everywhere,
And all at once, made manifest,
Like a wild meteor in a troubled air,
Whose motion never may be guest.
For over all the lurid rack
Of smoking battle, blazed and burn'd,
And stream'd and flasht,
Like flame before the wind upturn'd,
The great imperial ensign splasht
With blood of Turks: where'er he dasht
Amongst their bruised battalions, I
Saw them before him reel and fly:
As when a falcon from on high,
Pounce on a settle-down of doves,
That murmurs make in myrrhy groves,
Comes flying all across the sky,
And scatters them with instant fright;
So flew the Turks to left and right,
Broken before him. Milosch fell,
Pursued by myriads down the dell,
Upon Sitnitza's rushy brink,
Whose chilly waves will roll, I think,
So long as time itself doth roll,
Red with remorse that they roll o'er him.
Christ have mercy on his soul,
And blessèd be the womb that bore him.
Not alone he fell. Before him
Twelve thousand Turkish soldiers fell,
Slaughter'd in the savage dell.

His right hand was wet and red
With the blood that he had shed,
And in that red right hand he had
(Shorn from the shoulder sharp) the head
Of the Turkish Tzar, Murad.

"There resteth to Servia a glory,
A glory that shall not grow old;
There remaineth to Servia a story,
A tale to be chanted and told!
They are gone to their graves grim and gory,
The beautiful, brave, and bold;
But out of the darkness and desolation,
Of the mourning heart of a widow'd nation,
Their memory waketh an exultation!
Yea, so long as a babe shall be born,
Or there resteth a man in the land—
So long as a blade of corn
Shall be reapt by a human hand—
So long as the grass shall grow
On the mighty plain of Kossovo—
So long, so long, even so,
Shall the glory of those remain
Who this day in battle were slain.

"And as for what ye inquire
Of Vouk,—when the worm and mole
Are at work on his bones, may his soul
Eternally singe in hell-fire!
Curst be the womb that bore him!
Curst be his father before him!
Curst be the race and the name of him!

And foul as his sin be the fame of him!
For blacker traitor never drew sword—
False to his faith, to his land, to his lord!
And doubt ye, doubt ye, the tale I tell?
'Ask of the dead, for the dead know well;
Let them answer ye, each from his mouldy bed,
For there is no falsehood among the dead:
And there be twelve thousand dead men know
Who betray'd the Tzar at Kossovo."

I.

THE STAG AND THE VILA.

O'ER the mountain, the wild stag browses the mountain herbage alone,
At morn he browses, at noon he sickens, at eve he maketh moan.
From the rifts of the rocky quarries the Vila* hears him, and calls,

* The Vilas are supernatural beings that appear frequently in the poetry, and exist to this day in the popular superstition, of the Serbs. I have been unable to trace their origin, but they would seem to be a remnant of the early Slave mythology; and, being a mountain race, to have survived the fate of the lowland members of the fairy family, notwithstanding the presence of perhaps almost as many "holy freres" as those to whose "*blessing of thorpes and dairies*," Chaucer, in his day, attributed the fact that "*there bin no faëries.*" They are a kind of fierce Oreads, dwelling among the mountains and forests, and sometimes about the margin of waste waters. Their attributes are varying, and not distinctly ascertainable, but they are mostly terrible, and hostile to man. They are not, however, incapable of sympathy with the human race; for they have been known (though generally after being vanquished by them) to love great heroes. Evidence of this is to be found in the recorded exploits of Marko Kralievitch. That hero was beloved by one of these beings, who, indeed, prophesied his death, and that of his horse, Charatz. This

"O beast of the mountain meadows, the woods, and the waterfalls,
What sorrow is thine, so great that, browsing at morn, at noon thou ailest,
And now to the stars thou art moaning? What is it that thou bewailest?"
And the stag to the Vila makes answer, mournfully moaning low:
"O queen of the mountain, my sister! I mourn for my lost white doe,
My milk-white doe, my darling! from me, o'er the mountain track,
She wander'd away to the fountain; she wander'd, she never came back.
Either forlornly she wanders, mourning me, missing her way,

---

animal was aged above one hundred and fifty years at the period of his death, and, according to some authorities, was the gift of a Vila. The love of these beings, however, is generally treacherous, and often fatal. The Vilas are not immortal, nor invulnerable. The Vila Ravioëla, who wounded the voivode Milosch with a golden arrow, was nearly massacred by Marko. They preserve, however, through incalculable time, supernatural youth and beauty. They believe in God and Saint John, and abhor the Turks. When they appear to mortal eyes it is as

"Unwedded maids,
Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows
Than have the white breasts of the Queen of Love,"

with long hair floating over their shoulders, and clothed in snow-white vesture. They are wise in the use of herbs and simples, they know the properties of every flower and berry, and possess strange medical arts.

Or the hunters have follow'd and found her, and she hath perisht their prey,
Or else she forgets me, the faithless thing! and ever by valley and crag
Strays wanton after a belling note, and follows another stag.
If she be lost in the lonesome places, and hollows under the moon,
I pray that God, of his goodness, will guide her back to me soon.
If the hunters have slain my beloved one, wandering the woodland alone,
I pray that God, of his justice, will send them a fate like my own;
But if she follows another stag, caring no more to come back,
I pray that God, in his vengeance, guide the hunter fleet on her track."

II.

LOVE AND SLEEP.

I WALKT the high and hollow wood, from dawn to evendew,
The wild-eyed wood stared on me, and unclaspt, and let me through,
Where mountain pines, like great black birds, stood percht against the blue.

Not a whisper heaved the woven woof of those warm trees:

All the little leaves lay flat, unmoved of bird or breeze:
Day was losing light all round, by indolent degrees.

Underneath the brooding branches, all in holy shade,
Unseen hands of mountain things a mossy couch had made;
There asleep among pale flowers my beloved was laid.

Slipping down, a sunbeam bathed her brows with bounteous gold,
Unmoved upon her maiden breast her heavy hair was roll'd,
Her smile was silent as the smile on corpses three hours old.

"O God!" I thought, "if this be death, that makes not sound nor stir!"
My heart stood still with tender awe, I dared not waken her,
But to the dear God, in the sky, this prayer I did prefer:

"Grant, dear Lord, in the blessèd sky, a warm wind from the sea,
To shake a leaf down on my love from yonder leafy tree;
That she may open her sweet eyes, and haply look on me."

The dear God, from the distant sea a little wind releast,
It shook a leaflet from the tree, and laid it on her breast.

Her sweet eyes ope'd, and looked on me. How can I tell the rest?

III.

TITTLE-TATTLE.

Two lovers kist in the meadow green,
They thought there was none to espy:
But the meadow green told what it had seen
To the white flock wandering by.
The white flock told it the shepherd:
The shepherd the traveller from far:
The traveller told it the mariner,
Watching the pilot star:
The mariner told it his little bark:
The little bark told it the sea:
The sea told it the river,
Flowing down by the lea:
The river told it the maiden's mother,
And so to the maid it came back:
The maiden, as soon as she heard it,
Curst them all for a tell-tale pack:

"Meadow, be barren for ever,
Grass, grow not henceforth from the mould of thee!
Flock, be devour'd by the wolf!
Shepherd, the Turk seize hold of thee!
Traveller, rot of the fever!
Mariner, drown in the gulf!
Bark, may the whirlwind perplex thee,

And break thee against the shore!
Sea, may the moon ever vex thee!
River, be dry evermore!"

IV.

MATRIMONIAL CONSIDERATIONS.

WHERE mountains shut the silence up, a milk-white
maiden stood:
Her face was like a light, and kindled all the solitude.
And while the wild white mountain flowers turned
passionately pale,
And while the chilly water ran reluctant to the vale,
And the bald eagle, near the sun, stood still on some
tall peak,
That milk-white maiden to her own sweet face began
to speak:

"O face, sweet source of all my care,
Fair face (because I know thee fair!)
If I knew thou should'st be kist
By any husband, wither'd, old, and grey,
I would wander, mist-like, with the mist,
The monstrous mountain many a league away,
Until, in some abandon'd place,
Where the starved wolf cracks the bones
Of perisht men, and the wind groans
For want of something to devour,
I should find, wild in the wind,
Among the blotcht and mildew'd stones,

The harsh-blowing absinth flower;
And pluck the stubborn root of it,
That from the bitter fruit of it
I might the blighting juice express;
Therewith to bathe thee, O my face, my face!
Till all thy beauty should be bitterness,
And each unloved caress
Burn on the old man's lip, which should embrace
Death on thy rosy portals, O my face!

"But if I knew, O my face, my face!
That thy lips should be kist by whom I would list,
I would glide, unespied, to a place, my face,
Where red roses, I know, ripely ripple and blow,
And white lilies grow more snowy than snow;
And all in the balmy evening light,
While the dew is new, and the stars but a few,
The roses so red, and the lilies so white,
I would pluck, with the sunset upon them, and press
From those flowers their sweetest sweetnesses,
To embalm thee, my face, till what he should embrace
Should be fairer than lilies and richer than roses;
So that when on thy lips my beloved one reposes,
A thousand summers of fragrant sighs
Might fan the faint fire of his soul's desire
With raptures pure as the rivers that rise
Among the valleys of Paradise."

V.

LOVE CONFERS NOBILITY.

He. Violet,* little one mine!
I would love thee, but thou art so small.

She. Love me, my love, from those heights of thine,
And I shall grow tall, so tall!
The pearl is small, but it hangs above
A royal brow, and a kingly mind:
The quail is little, little, my love,
But she leaves the hunter behind.

VI.

A SOUL'S SWEETNESS.

He. O maiden of my soul!
What odour from the orange hast thou stole,
That breathes about thy breast with such sweet power?
What sweetness, unto me
More sweet than amber honey to the bee
That builds i' the oaken bole,
And sucks the essential summer of the year
To store with sweetest sweets her hollow tower?
Or is it breath of basil, maiden dear?
Or of the immortal flower?

* Violet is a pet name, as well as a proper name.

She. By the sweet heavens, young lover!
No odour from the orange have I stole;
Nor have I robb'd for thee,
Dearest, the amber dower
Of the building bee,
From any hollow tower
In oaken bole:
But if, on this poor breast thou dost discover
Fragrance of such sweet power,
Trust me, O my belovèd and my lover,
'Tis not of basil, nor the immortal flower,
But from a virgin soul.

VII.

REMINISCENCES.

He. And art thou wed, my Belovèd?
My Belovèd of long ago!

She. I am wed, my Belovèd. And I have given
A child to this world of woe.
And the name I have given my child is thine,
So that, when I call to me my little one,
The heaviness of this heart of mine
For a little while may be gone.
For I say not . . . "Hither, hither, my son!"
But . . . "Hither, my love, my Belovèd!"

VIII.

SLEEP AND DEATH.

THE morning is growing: the cocks are crowing:
Let me away, love, away!

'Tis not the morning light;
Only the moonbeam white.
Stay, my white lamb, stay,
And sleep on my bosom, sleep!

The breeze is blowing: the cattle are lowing:
Let me away, love, away!

'Tis not the cattle there;
Only the call to prayer.
Stay, my white lamb, stay,
And sleep on my bosom, sleep!

The Turks are warning to the mosk: 'tis morning!
Let me away, love, away!

'Tis not the Turks, sweet soul!
Only the wolves that howl.
Stay, my white lamb, stay,
And sleep on my bosom, sleep!

The white roofs are gleaming: the glad children screaming:
Let me away, love, away!

'Tis the night-clouds that gleam :
The night winds that scream.
Stay, my white lamb, stay,
And sleep on my bosom, sleep !

My mother in the gateway calls to me . . . " Come straightway ! "
And I must away, love, away !

Thy mother 's in her bed,
Dumb, holy, and dead.
Stay, my white lamb, stay,
And sleep on my bosom, sleep !

IX.

A CONJUGAL DISPUTE.

All at the mid of the night, there arose
A quarrel 'twixt husband and wife ;
For, the young Omer Bey and his spouse,
Falling into discussion and strife,
Wild words to each other they said,
Side by side, at the dead
Of the night, on their marriage bed.

Had it been about anything less
The quarrel might have passt by ;
But it was not a trifle, you guess,
That set words running so high.
Yet the cause in dispute (to be brief)
Was only a white handkerchief,

Broider'd all over with gold,
And scented with rose and with amber,
So sweet the whole house could not hold
That scent from the nuptial chamber.
For (the whole truth herewith to disclose)
This handkerchief border'd with gold,
And scented with amber and rose,
Had been given to the Bey (to enfold
Her letters, which lay on his breast),
By the mistress that he loved best.
But his wife had a sensitive nose
For the scent of amber and rose;
And the fiend himself only knows
Whether, but for a lie, ere the close
Of that quarrel there had not been blows.

"You know I've a sister, my treasure,
The wife of our friend Zekir Bey;
I love her, you know, beyond measure,
And she, dear, on our bridal day,
To me gave this white handkerchief,
Border'd all over with gold,
And scented with amber and rose;
Which precious, for her sake, I hold,
Though the scent of it, much to my grief,
Has troubled our nuptial repose."

Smiling, her husband she heard,
Feeling no faith in his word,
For troubled his face was, she saw.
Up she leapt by the light of the taper,
Barefooted, and seized ink and paper;
And wrote to her sister-in-law:—

" Wife of our friend, Zekir Bey,
Long live thy husband, nought ail him,
May'st thou never have cause to bewail him!
Speak truth, and fear nothing. But say
(For truly the truth must be told)
To thy brother, on our bridal day,
Did'st thou give a white handkerchief, brightly
Embroider'd all over with gold,
And scented with rose and with amber
So sweet, that the scent of it nightly
May be smelt in the Bey's bridal chamber?"

When this came to the wife of the Bey,
She burst into tears, as she read:
And "Pity upon me!" she said,
"For I know not, alas! what to say.
If I speak truth, I put strife
'Twixt the brother I love and his wife;
If I speak false, much I dread
Lest my husband die for it," she said.

Then the letter she laid in her breast,
And she ponder'd with many a sigh,
"I choose of two evils the least,
If my husband must die, let him die!
Since the choice lies 'twixt one or the other—
Any husband a woman may spare,
But the sister that injures a brother
Does that which she cannot repair."

Thus shrewdly the matter she saw:
And she wrote to her sister-in-law:—

"Wife of my brother, the Bey!
My husband is well. May naught ail him!
And I trust I shall never bewail him.
To my brother on your marriage day
(And truly the truth shall be told)
I gave a white handkerchief, brightly
Embroider'd all over with gold,
And scented with rose and with amber
So sweet, that the scent (as you say,
And as I cannot doubt of it) nightly
May be smelt in the Bey's bridal chamber."

X.

DEGREES OF AFFECTION.

Up and down the Tchardak,* underneath the blossom'd roof,
Musing, young Iövo, † at midnoon, walkt all aloof.
Suddenly the Tchardak broke beneath him: slipping through
The rotten plank, he fell, and his right arm was snapt in two.
Straight, a leech he sought him. Evil leech, in truth, he found.
Save the mountain Vila, none had skill to heal the wound:
But the Vila claim'd in price of service, ere the cure began,

* A sort of gallery or verandah, running round a house. Also, sometimes, a pavilion, summer-house, or granary.

† Diminutive for Iovan or John.

The right hand of the mother of the maim'd and mangled man;
The long hair of his sister with the riband in the hair;
And the white pearl necklace which his wife was wont to wear.
The mother gave her right hand, and the sister gave her curls;
But the wife refused her necklace . . . "I? I will not give my pearls!
Each is perfect, each is precious, nowhere else is such a set.
'Twas my dowry from my father, and I mean to wear it yet."
This the Vila of the mountain heard; and, anger'd in her mood,
She dropt a little purple drop of poison in the food
Of young Iövo, and he died.

Then, for the murder'd man,
Those three women to lament, in funeral dole began.
One there was that, deeply mourning, evermore did grieve:
One that miss'd and mourn'd for him at morning and at eve:
One that mourn'd him now and then, with eyes a little dim,
And looks a little changed, whenever she remember'd him.
She whose sorrow ceasèd not, mourning more than any other,

Missing aye her murder'd son, was young Iövo's mother:
She that mourn'd at morning, and at evening mourn'd and miss'd her
Brother, when day came or went, was young Iövo's sister.
She that mourn'd him now and then, when sometimes in her life
Old memories fill'd vacant hours, was young Iövo's wife.

XI.

THE FAIR IKONIA.

THE fair Ikonia boasted at the bath,
Gaily, amidst the matrons . . . "Tell me which
Amongst you, matrons, such a husband hath
As mine, Iövo Morniakovitch?
Where he goeth, there I go:
Where he resteth, there rest I:
Is he silent? then I know
That he names me silently:
Does he speak? of me he speaketh:
Does he dream? of me he dreameth:
Does he wake? for me he waketh:
Mine by night, when moonlight beameth!
Mine at dawn, when daylight breaketh!
First from dreams of me to wake,
That his kiss may ope my eyes:
'*Dear, the dawn begins to break,*

Light of my life, arise! arise!'
Life is long, the journey through it
Lone and weary, others tell.
I shall never turn and miss him
From my side, and this is well."
This the wily widow, Anna,
Heard, and slyly slipt away:
Then she clothed herself with splendour:
And she stood, in rich array,
Where, from the Bazar, Iövo
Came home, singing all the way:
Deckt her cheeks with painted roses,
Darker dyed her midnight hair,
Breathed the breath of perfumed posies,
Laid her bounteous bosom bare,
Stood like glory in the gateway,
Murmur'd, mild as evening air,

"Sad, Iövo, seems thy case,
Wedded to a barren wife;
If thou would'st not see thy race
Pass and perish, with thy life,
Wed with me, and I will bear thee
Every year a noble heir,
Every year a gracious infant,
With strong hands and golden hair."*
Long he listen'd: soft her voice was;
Long he lookt: her dark eyes glisten'd.

* The epithet "golden" generally implies "strength" in the Serb poetry. The words are literally "with golden hands," &c.

As the counsel, so the choice was.
All too long he lookt and listen'd.
Thus the wily widow, Anna,
Won Iövo then and there:
And each year a boy she bore him
With strong hands and golden hair.
Silent walk'd the fair Ikonia,
Making neither moan nor word,
Up the great Bazar walkt silent,
And she bought herself a cord:

In the garden square a golden
Orange-tree grows all alone,
There her silken cord she fasten'd,
And she hang'd herself thereon.

Came one running to Iövo,
"On thy golden orange-tree,
Fair Ikonia, dead, is hanging."

"Hanging? Let her hang!" quoth he,
"I've a fairer far than she."

XII.

A WISH.

I WOULD I were a rivulet,
And I know where I would run!
To Save, the chilly river,
Where the market boats pass on;
To see my dear one stand

By the rudder; and whether the rose
Which, at parting, I put in his hand,
Warm with a kiss in it, blows;
Whether it blows or withers:
I pluckt it on Saturday;
I gave it to him on Sunday;
On Monday he went away.

XIII.

IMPERFECTION.

All in the spring,
When little birds sing,
And flowers do talk
From stalk to stalk;
Whispering to a silver shower,
A violet did boast to be
Of every flower the fairest flower
That blows by lawn or lea.
But a rose that blew thereby
Answer'd her reproachfully
(All in the spring,
When little birds sing,
And flowers do talk
From stalk to stalk):
"Violet, I marvel me
Of fairest flower by lawn or lea
The fairest thou should'st boast to be;
For one small defect I spy,
Should make thee speak more modestly:

Thy face is fashion'd tenderly,
But then it hangs awry."

XIV.

EMANCIPATION.

THE Day of Saint George! and a girl pray'd thus:
"O Day of Saint George, when again to us
Thou returnest, and thy carouse
Here in my mother's house,
May'st thou find me either a corpse or a bride,
Either buried or wed;
Rather married than dead;
But however that may betide,
And whether a corpse or a spouse,
No more in my mother's house."

XV.

THE VOICE OF NATURE; OR, WHAT THE FISH SAID TO THE MAIDEN.

By the sea a maiden is sitting,
And she says to herself at her knitting:

"O my heart! what more deep than the ocean,
Or more wide than the plain can be?
Or more swift than the horse in his motion?
Or more sweet than the food of the bee?
Or more dear than a brother?"

And a fish from the sea replies :

" O maiden, but a little wise !
The plain is less wide than the sea,
And the heaven more deep than this is ;
Eyes swifter than horses be ;
And honey less sweet than kisses ;
And a lover more dear than all other."

XVI.

THE MALADY OF MOIO.

Moïo, the Tzarovitch (bolder is no man !)
Walkt to the Bath with the Turk lords one day :
Mahmoud the Pacha's white wife (and what woman
Is fairer than she is ?) was walking away.
Even as the sun, o'er the ardours of even,
Looks on the moon, and the moon on the sun,
Wistfully, each, disunited in heaven,
Soon to be pacing far pathways alone,
So through the mist of a moment of ecstacy,
Thrilled with a rapture delicious and dim,
Mute on the pale Pachinitza the Tzarovitch
Gazed, the pale Pachinitza on him.
Moïo walkt silently back to his palace :
Troubled his heart was, and changed was his mood.
Straightway he sicken'd of love, and lay dying,
Dying of love for the wife of Mahmoud.
Ladies the loveliest all came to visit him :
Only the wife of Mahmoud stay'd away.
Then the Sultana rose up and wrote to her—

" Wouldst thou be greater than all of us, say ?
Moïo is lying upon his couch dying ;
Sore is his sickness, and fatal they say :
Ladies the loveliest all come to visit him,
Thou, art thou more, Pachinitza, than they ? "
She, when she heard of it, loopt up her white sleeve,
Loopt up her light robe as white as a star ;
Presents she bore for him, worthy a monarch's son,
Figs from the sea-coast, and grapes from Mostar.
Lightly she trod o'er the long golden gallery,
Past all ungreeted the corridor dim,
Pale, the dumb purple pavilion she enter'd,
Where the Sultana was watching by him.
Softly she sat by his bedside, and softly
Wiped from his forehead the fever, and said,
" This is a malady known to me surely !
Long did I watch, and long weep by the bed
Once where my brother lay moaning and mad of it,
Moaning and madden'd, unable to move ;
Poison they said it was. I, too, have drunk of it.
This is the passionate poison of love."
Trembling he listen'd, as trembling she utter'd it.
Lightly he leapt from the couch where he lay,
Fasten'd, behind her, the long golden gallery,
Laught as he sank on her soft lips, and they
Three white days, little heeding the daylight,
Three blue nights, little noting the moon,
Seal'd by sweet kisses in silent caresses,
Rested, while round them May melted to June.
Gaily the nightingale sang in the garden.
Love the bird sang of, and sweet was the tune.
Three white days, little loving the daylight,

Three blue nights, ill at rest 'neath the moon,
Mahmoud the Pacha walkt, mourning his miss'd one,
" Come, Pachinitza, come back to me soon ! "
Sadly the nightingale sang in his garden.
Love the bird sang of, but harsh was the tune.
Then, when the fourth day was low in the orient,
Mahmoud the Pacha sat down in his hall;
There a white letter he wrote to the Sultan:
" Sultan Imperial, dear master of all !
There's a white dove, with a gold treasure casket,
Flown to thy doors from thy servant's abode.
Send back my white dove, restore me my treasure,
If thou hast fear of the justice of God."
But to the Pacha the Sultan sent answer:
" Mahmoud, my servant, behoves thee to know
There's in my palace a falcon unhooded,
And what he hath taken he never lets go."

XVII.

A SERVIAN BEAUTY.

'Tis the Kolo* that dances before the white house,
And 'tis Stoian's fair sister, O fair, fair is she !

* *Kolo*, signifying literally a wheel, is the generic term for all the Servian national dances; in most of which the dancers, either taking hands, or united each to each by a handkerchief tied round the waist or to the girdle, form a ring and advance or retreat to and from the centre to a monotonous music, either of the voice or some very simple wind instruments. Both sexes take part in these dances, which are frequently in the open air.

Too fair she is truly, too fair heaven knows,
(God forgive her!) so cruel to be.
The fair Vila, whom the wan clouds fondly follow
O'er the mountain wherever she roam it,
Is not fairer nor whiter than she.
Her long soft eyelash is the wing of the swallow
When the dew of the dawn trembles from it,
And as dawn-stars her blue eyes to me;
Her eyebrows so dark are the slender sea-leeches;*
Her rich-bloomèd cheeks are the ripe river peaches,
Her teeth are white pearls from the sea;
Her lips are two half-open'd roses;
And her breath the south wind, which discloses
The sweetness that soothes the wild bee.
She is tall as the larch, she is slender
As any green bough the birds move;
See her dance—'tis the peacock's full splendour!
Hear her talk—'tis the coo of the dove!
And, only but let her look tender—
'Tis all heaven melting down from above!

XVIII.

A DISCREET YOUNG WOMAN.

MILITZA has long soft eyelashes,
So darkly-dreaming droopt on either cheek,
You scarce can guess what little lightning flashes
From those deep eyes, beneath them beaming, break.
And her fair face, like a flower,

* A strange, but very frequent, simile in Servian poetry.

Has such drooping ways about it,
I have watcht her, many an hour,
Three full years (O never doubt it !),
And yet never have seen fairly
Eyes or face,—reveal'd so rarely !

Only just to rob one glance
From the happy grass beneath her
On the green where maidens dance
When the month makes merry weather,
I the Kolo call'd together,
Trusting to my happy chance.
While the dance grew sweeter, faster
(Bosoms heaving, tresses shaken),
Suddenly with dim disaster
All the sky was overtaken.
Rolling darkness drown'd the sunlight,
Rolling thunder drencht the valleys,
And in heaven was left but one light
From the lightning's livid sallies.

Like a necklace lightly shatter'd,
Shedding rubies, shedding pearls,
Here and there the Kolo scatter'd
All its bevy of bright girls.
Little, darling, timid creatures !
Each, with frighten'd flutter'd features,
Lifted up her pretty eyes
To the tempest growling o'er her ;
But Militza, very wise,
Still kept looking straight before her.

Little voices, silvery, wild,
All at once, in fretful cadence,
Brake out chiding the sweet child.
"What, Militza!" cried the maidens,
"Those grass-grazing eyes, I wonder,
From the ground can nothing startle?
Hark, child! how it groans, the thunder!
See! the lightnings, how they dartle
Here and there by angry fits,
In and out the stormy weather!
Hast thou wholly lost thy wits,
Little fool? Or must we deem
Thou wouldst something wiser seem
Than the whole world put together?"

But Militza answers . . . "Neither
Have I lost my wits, nor grown
Wiser, maidens, I must own,
Than the whole world put together.
I am not the Vila white,
Who, amidst her mountain ranges,
Lifting looks of stormy light,
Through his fifty moody changes,
Woos the tempest's troubled sprite
Down the mountain melting o'er her—
I am not a Vila white,
But a girl that looks before her."

XIX.

BOLOZÀNOVITCH THE KNAVE.

DJOUL,* the Turk, on a morning in May,
When every bird is brilliant in feather,
And every flower in blossom is gay,
To celebrate sweetly the merry May weather,
From dawn to dusk, in dance and play,
Call'd a hundred matrons and maids together.
And the fairest maiden of all, that day,
Was the maid Bolozànovitch loved, they say.

He sought her all a summer noon,
And on to eventide;
He [illegible]ght her under the summer moon,
[illegible]ugh all the country wide,
Till at nightfall he came, in the mist and murk,
To the lighted house of Djoul, the Turk.

"Djoul, Djoul with the raven hair!
Give me a shift of linen fair,
Such as thyself art wont to wear
On the day when the glad new moon is born;
Paint me the eyebrow with antimony;
These bronzèd cheeks with white and red.
Colour; and comb me, and curl me the head;
Hang me over the shoulders free
Silken tresses two or three,

* For *Gul*, the Turk word, meaning *rose*.

Such as by matron or maid are worn;
Bind me the brow with a golden braid,
And clothe me, anon, in the clothes of a maid
From head to foot, with many a fold
Of the milk-white tunic flowing and full;
And give me a distaff of gold
And a ball of Egyptian wool;
Then suffer me thus 'mid the maidens to move,
That I may speak to the maiden I love."

Djoul, the Turk with the raven hair,
Laught as she listen'd, and granted his prayer.
She clothed him in clothes of a maid,
Comb'd him and curl'd him the hair,
Painted his dark face fair,
Over his long limbs laid
Many a milk-white fold
Of vesture flowing and full;
Then gave him a distaff of gold,
And a ball of Egyptian wool;
And when he was trickt, and pincht, and padded,
And painted, and plaster'd, to look like a lass,
Because he yet lookt like the knave that he was,
This good counsel she added:

"Bolozànovitch, knave, take note!
When anon, 'mid our women ye stand,
The old women take by the hand,
And kiss on their finger tips;
The young women kiss on the lips;
But for those that are maidens and girls,
You shall kiss them under the throat,
And over the collar of pearls."

Bolozànovitch gladly (the knave!)
Gave heed to the counsel she gave,
And of all, as she bade him, took note.
The old women each on the finger tips
He kist, and the young women each on the lips,
And the maidens under the throat.

Maidenlike thus 'mid the maidens he moved,
Drooping the eyelid over the ground;
But when he came to the maiden he loved,
He made her a little red wound
Just in the soft white fold
Of her slender throat. Then she
Cried out to the women around,
"Strike! strike with your distaffs of gold,
The knave who has wounded me!
For this was not a woman. Behold,
'Tis the knave Bolozànovitch, he!

XX.*

THE WIFE OF HASSAN AGA.

WHAT is it so white on the mountain green?
A flight of swans? or a fall of snow?
The swans would have flown, and the snow would have been

* This poem was translated by Goethe into German, in 1789, from an Italian translation published by the Abbé Fortis in 1774; and was thus first of these national songs and legends that ever passed from Servia into more civilized lands. Goethe's translation (Klaggesang von der edeln Fraun des Asan Aga) is unrhymed.

Melted away long ago.
It is neither snow-fall, nor yet swan-flight,
But the tent of Hassan Aga so white.
Sore was the wound which in battle he got,
His mother and sister (for these without blame
Might do as they listed) to visit him came;
But his wife, for the modest-minded shame
Of a matron chaste, could not.

Wherefore, when he had heal'd him his wound so sore,
Anger'd he said to his faithful spouse:
"Meet me no more, see me no more,
'Mid our children, within my white house."
He frown'd and he rode away.
Silent with deep dismay,
The Turkish woman wept,
Bitterly wept at her husband's word,
Clothed herself with sorrow, and crept
Into her chamber, and cover'd her brows,
When the hoof of a horse was heard
At the door of the Aga's house.

The fair Aguinitza* fled trembling away
To the window, to fling herself down in her fear:
Her two little daughters came running, and they
Cried, "Mother, come back, mother dear!
For it is not our father Hassan is here,
But our uncle Pintorovitch Bey."

Back she turn'd, faltering she came,
Weeping she fell on the breast of her brother,

* The wife of an Aga; as *Pachinitza*, wife of a Pacha.

And . . . "O my brother," . . . she cried . . . "the shame,
From her children to sever a mother!"

The Bey held silence, nor answer'd a word,
His smile was stern but his eyes were dim,
As he drew from his silken pouch, and laid
In the hands of his sister, the letter which said
That her dower to her should, in full, be restored,
And she should return to their mother with him.*
When the fair Turk that letter had read,
Her children she call'd to her one by one,
She kist her two boys on the brow and cheek:
She kist her two girls on their lips' young red:
But when to the little one, lying alone
In the little cradle, she came,
The little one smiled as he slept:
Her heart began to break
With an inward anguish of shame:
She could neither move nor speak:
She sat down by the cradle and wept.

Then her brother Pintorovitch Bey
Drew softly the cradle away,
Lifted her into the saddle behind,
Turn'd, as he mounted, and kist her,
And rode off to his house with his sister,
Over the hills, in the wind.

Not long in the house of her mother
She rested; not even a week.
Lovers, one after the other,

* The writing of divorce.

Came riding to sue and to seek:
For never more lovely a lady
Breath'd beauty to trouble the land,
And soon from Imoski the Kadi
Came gaily to ask for her hand.

"O spare me, O save me, my brother!
My poor heart in sunder is reft:
My poor eyes are full of old tears:
Let me not be the bride of another,
For the sake of my little ones left,
For the sake of the once happy years!"

But of all this full lightly he thought,
And he gave to the Kadi her hand:
Then sadly the Bey she besought,
And moaning she made her demand—
On a fair paper, pure white,
The words to Imaski to write:

"*Fair greeting, in fair courtesy,*
For her that hath been given to thee,
And courtesy to her prayer!
When the noble Svats assembled be,*

* The Servian ceremonial of marriage is very peculiar. On the wedding day the bridegroom proceeds to the house of the bride, accompanied by the guests, of both sexes, who attend the marriage on *his* invitation; and who in this capacity (of guests or witnesses) are called *Svats*. He is supported by a *Koum*, or Best-man, a *Stari Svat*, or chief guest (the oldest and most honoured of the company), who attest the marriage, and a *Dever* (paranymph or groomsman), which latter personage may be a married man. These receive the bride from the

And ye come in a noble company
From her white house to carry thy bride,
Bring ye a long white covering fair
To cover her eyes; that so, when ye ride
Beside the white house of the Aga, she
May see not the little ones there."

When this letter was comé to the Kadi's hand,
He assembled the noblest Svats of the land;
And they all in a noble company rode
To carry the bride from her white abode.
Gaily to seek her they started,
And with her they gaily departed.
But, when they were merrily riding before
The Aga's white house, from the window at once
Lookt her two little daughters; her two little sons
Came running to her from the door,
And . . . "Come back, mother dear, with us, come!
For dinner is waiting at home."

Then, weeping, the twice-wedded spouse
To the bold Stari Svat, . . . "Dear, my brother in God,

hands of her parents, and are bound not to lose sight of her till she enters her new home. All participation in the nuptial ceremonial is interdicted by custom to the parents of the bride, who do not again behold their daughter until eight days after the marriage. A mother, indeed, cannot, compatibly with established usage, attend or be near her daughter in child-bed. By being groomsman or witness to a marriage, a relationship is contracted with the bride's family of a nature so close and so strict as to be deemed incompatible with marriage at any future period between the groomsman and any member of that family.

For the dear love of God, pass not by this abode!
Let the horse wait here by the house;
That I, ere I see them no more,
(My dear ones, my little ones, see them no more!)
May speak, though it be but a while."
And the horses stopt straightway, and stood by the door,
And she past through the door with a smile.
Gay gifts to her children she gave:
To both of her boys bold and brave
Golden jatagans rich, and to both
Of her girls a long-tunic of cloth.
But when to the little one, lying alone
In the cradle, she came, she laid mournfully on
The small cradle a white orphan garment,
A little white garment, and sigh'd,
And turn'd from the cradle wild-eyed,
With looks of despairing endearment.

All of this Hassan Aga espied,
And he turn'd to his two sons, and cried,
"Little orphans, come here! come to me!
For pitiless, children, is she,
Your mother stone-hearted, the bride!"

Cruel, cruel and keen was the word!
Silent she listen'd and heard,
Heard the harsh words that he said.
To the black earth she bow'd her bright head:
She had not another reply,
Than to droop her white forehead, and die:
For the heart of the mother was broken in twain
For the love, and the loss, of her little ones ta'en.

XXI.

SLEEPLESSNESS.

SLEEP will not take the place of Love,
Nor keep the place from Sorrow.
Oh, when the long nights slowly move
To meet a lonely morrow,
The burthen of the broken days,
The grief that on the bosom weighs,
And all the heart oppresses,
But lightly lies on restless eyes
Love seals no more with kisses.

XXII.

NEGLECTED FLOWERS.

LITTLE violet, drooping all alone, like my own
Drooping heart, I would pluck thee; but there's none, no, not one!
To whom I dare to give thee: so I leave thee, and pass on.
I would give thee gladly, gladly, if I dared, to Ali Bey;
But too proud (ah well-a-day!) is Ali Bey—so they say!
Proud he is! I do not dare. Would he care, he, to wear
Any flower that buds or blows? . . . save the rose, I suppose!
No! rest there, and despair! Live or die! Thou and I
Have no chance to catch one glance from his eye, passing by.

XXIII.

PLUCKING A FLOWER.

He. O MAIDEN, vermeil rose!
Unplanted, unsown,
Blooming alone
As the wild-flower blows,
With a will of thine own!
Neither grafted nor grown,
Neither gather'd nor blown,
O maiden, O rose!
Blooming alone
In the green garden-close,
Unnoticed, unknown,
Unpropt, unsupported,
Unwater'd, unfed,
Unkist, and uncourted,
Unwoo'd, and unwed,
O sweet wild rose,
Who knows? Who knows?
Might I kiss thee, and court thee?
My kiss would not hurt thee!
O sweet, sweet rose,
In the green garden-close,
If a gate were undone,
And if I might come to thee,
And meet thee alone?
Sue thee, and woo thee,
And make thee my own?
Clasp thee, and cull thee,—what harm would be done?

She. Beside thy field my garden blows.
Were a gate in the garden left open . . . who
. knows?
And I water'd my garden at eventide?
(Who knows?)
And if somebody silently happen'd to ride
That way? And a horse to the gate should be
tied?
And if somebody (who knows who?), unespied,
Were to enter my garden to gather a rose?
Who knows? . . . I suppose
No harm need be done. My belovèd one,
Come lightly, come softly, at set of the sun!
Come, and caress me!
Kiss me, and press me!
Fold me, and hold me!
Kiss me with kisses that leave not a trace,
But set not the print of thy teeth on my face,
Or my mother will see it, and scold me.

XXIV.

TRANSPLANTING A FLOWER.

O MAIDEN, mother's golden treasure!
Purest gold of perfect pleasure!
Do they beat thee, and ill-treat thee,
That I meet thee all alone?
Do they beat thee, that I meet thee
All too often, all too late,
After nightfall, at the gate

Of the garden, all alone?
Tell me, tell me, little one,
Do they do it? If I knew it,
They should rue it! I would come
Oftener, later, yet again,
(Hail, or snow, or wind, or rain!)
Oftener, later! Nor in vain:
For if mother, for my sake,
Were to drive thee out of home,
Just three little steps 'twould take
(Think upon it, little one!)—
Just three little steps, or four,
To my door from mother's door.
Love is wise. I say no more.
Ponder on it, little one!

XXV.

A MESSAGE.

SWEET sister of my loved, unloving one,
Kiss thy wild brother, kiss him tenderly!
Ask him what is it, witless, I have done
That he should look so coldly upon me?
Ah, well . . . I know he recks not! Let it be.
Yet say . . . "There's many a woodland nodding yet
For who needs wood when winter nights be cold."
Say . . . "Love to give finds ever love to get.
There lack not goldsmiths where there lacks not gold.
The wood will claim the woodman by-and-by;
The gold (be sure!) the goldsmith cannot miss;

Each maid to win finds lads to woo: and I . . ."
Well, child, but only tell him, tell him this!
Sweet sister, tell him this!

XXVI.

ISOLATION.

THE night is very dark and very lonely:
And as dark, and all as lonely, is my heart:
And the sorrow that is in it night knows only:
For the dawn breaks, and my heart breaks. Far apart
From my old self seems my new self. And my mother
And my sister are in heaven,—so they say:
And the dear one dearer yet than any other
Is far, far away.
The sweet hour of his coming . . . night is falling!
The hour of our awakening . . . bird on bough!
The hour of last embraces . . . friends are calling
"Love, farewell!" . . . and every hour is silent now.

XXVII.

A REGRET.

LOST empire of my maidenhood!
Could I be once more what I would,
Then what I am I would not be.
Ah well-a-day, and woe is me!
Could I a maiden be once more,
And unknow all that I have known,
And feel as I have felt of yore,
I would not change with any queen;
Not for sceptre, crown, or throne,

If I could be what I have been
Would I grow what I have grown.

Lost empire of my maidenhood !
Sweetest sweet ! and chiefest good !
Now that thou art gone, I know,
Could I call thee back again !
How to keep thee. Even so !
Loss is all my gain !

Would that I were with the flocks
As of old among the rocks !
For the flocks do blithely bleat,
And the mountain airs blow sweet,
And the river runneth fleet,
Running to the happy sea :
But the glory of the river,
And the gladness of the flocks,
And the mirth among the rocks,
And the music on the wind
Ministrant to a merry mind,
These are joyous things, for ever
Dead, or fled, for me !

On the wind there moans for ever
One word only, which the river,
Murmuring, murmurs to the shore,
And the flocks, with chilly bleat,
Evermore that word repeat,
And that word is—Nevermore !
Nevermore, O never, never
Any more, by mount or river,

Shall I be as I have been,
A mountain maid, a virgin queen!

XXVIII.

THE BAN OF VARADIN.

A WASSAILER in wildest ways,
But foul befall the churl who says
That what he drinks he never pays,
So mad a devil dwells within
The brain of Peter Doïtchin,
The burly Ban of Varadin! *

Three hundred ducats in a day,
Good sooth, he swill'd them all away!
And, when he had no more to pay,
First his massy mace of gold,
Then this coal-black horse he sold.
"Fill up the can, keep out the cold,
And let the merry devil in,
Sweetheart!" laught Peter Doïtchin,
The burly Ban of Varadin!

Quoth King Mathias† . . . "Burly Ban,
God curse thee for a brainless man,
Whose goods flow from him in the can!
Three hundred ducats in a day,
Thou hast swill'd them all away,
And, for lack of more to pay,
Thou thy massy mace of gold,

* Servian name for Petervardein, fortress in Hungary.
† Probably Mathias Corvinus.

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